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SIX OXFORD THINKERS

EDWARD GIBBON. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN. R. W. CHURCH. JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE. WALTER PATER. LORD MORLEY OF BLACKBURN

BY ALGERNON CECIL, M.A. OXON.

OF THE INNER TEMPLE, BARRISTER-AT-LAW

119406

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET W,

1909



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PREFACE

My best thanks are due to Mr John Murray for allowing me to reprint those parts of the following essays on Church, Froude, and Lord Morley, which originally appeared in the *Monthly Review*. I am also much indebted to Mr J. D. Milner of the National Portrait Gallery for some help with regard to portraits of Gibbon; and to Lady Margaret Cecil, Miss Froude, and Mr J. B. Rye, in respect of the essay on Froude. I should have wished to dedicate this book to Mr Herbert Fisher as a small, though most unworthy, recollection of his inexhaustible kindness to me both as tutor and friend; but I felt that he would be too much out of sympathy with the tenor of it to make this permissible, even had it not contained a modest refutation of a passage in a very ancient article of his, which Messrs Langlois and Seignobos have unfortunately drawn out of oblivion.

A. C.

LYTCHETT HEATH,
POOLE, *January* 1909.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY	1-7

EDWARD GIBBON

<p>Elia on the "Decline and Fall"—Gibbon's youth—Middleton's "Free Inquiry"—Gibbon anticipates the intellectual process of the Oxford Movement—Becomes a Roman Catholic—His later scepticism—His love-affair—His appearance—A militiaman—His prospects—The "Essai sur la Littérature"—Rome—No. 7 Bentinck Street and "La Grotte"—"The Decline and Fall"—Its significance among great histories—Its motive—Sketch of the narrative—Its merits—The influence of Christianity discussed—Finlay's view—The decline of the Roman Empire due to socialism—Gibbon as a historical artist—His style—Criticisms of his work—His auxiliaries—His failure—Place of Constantinople in his imagination—Gibbon at Lausanne—Gibbon and Pitt—The fall of the leaf—The end</p>	8-43
---	------

J. H. NEWMAN

<p>The "Character of a Gentleman," the touchstone of Newman's doctrines—And the cause of his secession—The conditions precedent to the Oxford Movement—Keble—Hurrell Froude—J. A. Froude's description of Newman—The "Assize Sermon"—The Hadleigh meeting: Pusey—The Four o'Clock Sermons at St Mary's; Newman's style of preaching—The Heads of Houses and the Bishops; "The Three Defeats"—The Jerusalem Bishopric—The young Catholic party; W. G. Ward—Newman's difficulties—Littlemore—The crisis: within—The crisis: without—The last act—The intellectual development of Newman's</p>	
---	--

mind—(a) The historical argument embodied in the "Essays on Miracles"; (b) The ecclesiastical argument embodied in the "Prophetical Office of the Church." Newman's conception of the Church. Anglicanism "unambitious" of it. Summary of the "Via Media of the Anglican Church." The rider attached to it; (c) The doctrinal argument embodied in the "Essay on the Development of Doctrine." Its value. The biological test. Leslie Stephen's criticism discussed. Mozley's criticism. A philosophy of History. (d) The theological argument. The inspiration of the Church—Newman as a Roman Catholic—The basis of religious belief; "A Grammar of Assent"—Newman and the Modernists—Conclusion of the "Grammar of Assent"—Newman's life in the Church of Rome—Pusey's "Eirenicon"—Gladstone's pamphlet—The "Achilli" case—The disagreement with Manning—The occasion of the "Apologia"—The "Apologia"—Newman's style. Its place in English literature—Newman as a historian—The bitterness of his satire—His severity—"The Dream of Gerontius"—Newman's foresight—The Cardinalate—The end—Criticisms—The charge of scepticism—The charge of credulity—Conclusion	44-122
--	--------

R. W. CHURCH

The Church of England—R. W. Church a brilliant exception to the common rule—Events of his life: scholar; statesman; saint—As scholar; (a) "The Gifts of Civilisation"; The Roman Empire and Christianity; (b) Essay on "Bishop Andrewes"—The Church of England; (c) Essay on "Bishop Butler"—The basis of religion—As statesman; (a) His high qualities for statesmanship; (b) "The Guardian"; (c) St Paul's—As saint; (a) His severity; (b) "The Ventures of Faith"; (c) Church and Newman; (d) The end; (e) His impressions of life	123-155
---	---------

J. A. FROUDE

Froude's place as a historian—Froude and Tacitus—His early life—The "Nemesis of Faith"—The outlook for Catholicism: Newman—The outlook for Protestantism: Carlyle—Bunsen and Modernism—	
---	--

CONTENTS

ix
PAGE

Froude's "History of England"—Froude's peculiar qualifications for writing it—Froude and Lecky as types of historical method—Froude's alleged mistakes—"A Siding at a Railway Station"—Froude and Freeman—The "Erasmus"—Froude's handicap—The great characters of his History—Henry, Anne, More, Cranmer, Latimer, Cromwell—The monasteries—The English Bible—The English Liturgy—The Articles—Cranmer's death the triumph of the English reformers—The Elizabethan settlement—The Spanish Armada—The conclusion—Carlyle's gospel—Life of Carlyle—Froude's divided allegiance; Christ and Cæsar—"The English in Ireland"—Froude in South Africa—"Oceana"—"The Bow of Ulysses"—Tariffs—Froude's conception of history—"Cæsar" and "Lord Beaconsfield"—Froude's style—His personality and appearance—The "Short Studies"—"The Cat's Pilgrimage"—Froude's opinions—Literary men—The Oxford Professorship—The end . . . 156-213

WALTER PATER

Ritualism old and new—Catholicity in Art—Pater's childhood—The collision with Ruskin—Ruskin's theory of Art—Pater's divergence—"Diaphaneité"—The gospel of Culture—Pater's theory of Art—The essay on "Æsthetic Poetry"—"Renaissance Studies"; Leonardo; Botticelli; Pico—"Greek Studies": The "Bacchæ"; "Demeter and Kore"—Pater's special talent—"Marius the Epicurean"—Marius and John Inglesant—"Imaginary Portraits"—"A Prince of Court Painters"; "Sebastian van Storck"—London life—The last phase—Oxford again—The end—His work and style—His religion sometimes followed to-day . . . 214-251

LORD MORLEY OF BLACKBURN

Lord Morley—Politics and religion—Newman's definition of Liberalism—Liberalism as it appears to-day—Liberal and Catholic ideals contrasted—

Mill—The enthusiasm of Liberty—The Encyclopædists—The benefits of Liberalism—Its superficiality—In the society of the French Liberals, Diderot, Helvetius, Holbach, Rousseau, Turgot, Condorcet, Voltaire ; Lord Morley's debt to them. Points of resemblance—Utilitarianism the basis of Liberalism—Conscience up to date—Some Nemesees of Utilitarianism—"On Compromise"—The unseen foundations of society undermined by Liberalism—The meaning of aristocracy—Gladstone and Ruskin—Lecky on Democracy—The "scientific" politician of the future—The Toryism of the past—Lord Morley's "Burke"—Lord Morley's views on religion—The religion of Science—Doubt and conviction—Lord Morley in public life—The Irish Secretariate—Lord Morley's later books on men of affairs : "Machiavelli," "Cromwell," "Gladstone"—Lord Morley as a historian—Scientific history fatalist in tendency—The moralities, insisted upon by Lord Morley, inconsistent with it—Effect of strong moral emotion on Lord Morley's style—His resemblance to Lucretius in temper of mind—His satire—Newman once more	252-301
---	---------

"The great object in trying to understand history, political, religious, literary or scientific, is to get behind men and grasp ideas. Ideas have a radiation and development, an ancestry and posterity of their own, in which men play the part of godfathers and godmothers more than of legitimate parents."

—"Letters of Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone," p. 6.

SIX OXFORD THINKERS

INTRODUCTORY

THE quotation from the late Lord Acton's letters, which stands on the preceding page, is probably as good a confession of faith as the student of modern history can require. Very slowly we are beginning to understand that the ideas of the past are infinitely more interesting than its battlefields, and of infinitely greater consequence to ourselves. To have felt 'the social tissue' of a society is to have been in touch with all that is most worth knowing about it. But the social tissue cannot be properly examined in an abstract manner by the isolation of ideas from their temporary hosts. It is not thus that ideas operate, and it is not thus that they can be reviewed. They require a dynamic, not a static, demonstration. They ought always to be seen in action and reaction against the lives of the men who stood their sponsors.

This book is an attempt to treat in this

fashion an idea or chain of ideas which exercised a profound influence upon the nineteenth century. One of the cardinal distinctions between that century and its predecessor was its respect for and deference to history. The philosophers had had a free hand in the eighteenth century, until at last Reason sat enthroned in the person of a woman, not ambitious of particular characterisation, on the altar of Notre Dame, and the Carmagnole was, as Carlyle said, 'complete.' Those who were wiser than the philosophers knew better how often Reason is a motive of action, how often merely a decent cloak to veil our passions. "The vice of modern legislation," said Napoleon, "is that it makes no appeal to the imagination." "I never was a rash disbeliever," says the hero in "Amelia," "my chief doubt was founded on this—that, as men appeared to me to act entirely from their passions their actions could have neither merit nor demerit." "A very worthy conclusion, truly!" cries the doctor; "but if men act as I believe they do, from their passions, it would be fair to conclude that religion to be true which applies immediately to the strongest of these passions, hope and fear; choosing rather to rely on its rewards and punishments than on that native beauty of virtue which some of the ancient

philosophers thought proper to recommend to their disciples."

So that, after Reason had for some years been written in blood about the squares and streets of Paris, and human nature was no longer looked at through the writings of the philosophers, but as it really happened to be, the old institutions which had been devised by the wisdom of ages to put some check upon the passions of men, began once more to seem important. History became profoundly interesting, and Religion followed along the tracts which History excavated. The Primitive Church, the Mediæval Church, and the Reformation were closely scrutinised. Men cared to know what their forefathers had believed and had thought it worth while to die for, and, whilst they continued to think freely and widely, thought also reverently, which had not been the case before. To depict, and in some degree to discuss the progress of Oxford thought in the nineteenth century by the light of the careers and characters of certain powerful Oxford intellects is the aim of these studies.

Gibbon, whose life lay entirely in the eighteenth century, and whose residence at the university was of the shortest, may, at first sight, appear out of place in such a collection. But, not only

is he something of a link between the philosophic attitude of the eighteenth and the historic attitude of the nineteenth century, but his time at Oxford was precisely the most important of his life from the point of view of this book ; his researches, or rather the conclusions he drew from them, the position at which the Catholic Movement was levelled ; and his history the constant companion of its leader.

Newman is, of course, the central figure of this, as he must be of any collection, in which his name appears. He brought the ideas of the Oxford Movement to a systematic completeness which could not have been satisfied anywhere outside of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Anglican view is exhibited through the mind of Church, the most beautiful mind of the nineteenth century. His outlook was wider and wiser than that of Keble and Pusey, and less emotional than that of Liddon, who might all have been chosen as types of the "Via Media Anglicana."

Froude is representative of a standpoint, which will, in the writer's view, become in the end that of all educated religious men who do not accept the Catholic—the word is used in the most liberal sense—view of the world. His Protestantism, not so stubborn as that of

Carlyle, nor so believing as that of Kingsley, lies somewhere between the creeds of these, his two great friends.

Pater illustrates the aftermath of the Catholic Revival ; a vague but beautiful ritualism, tenacious of old forms not real to those who use them, which has done very much to soften the hard lines of controversy, but has brought with it a certain decadence of genuine religious emotion and a remarkable intellectual insincerity in really good people.

The essay on Lord Morley of Blackburn, which hardly attempts to follow him into practical politics, stands at the close of the book, as Gibbon's stands at the beginning, for a foil to show the final significance for religion and the theory of politics in England of the Voltairean Movement. No one can fail to see in the colouring of Lord Morley's thoughts how deeply that movement had been modified by the Catholic Revival, how much more clearly men understood for what stakes they were playing.

It will be noticed that with four of these men at least, History is no register of the observations of an unmoved, disinterested, sometimes unmoral, spectator. The great causes with which they deal appear to them not merely to have been, but also to be, of vital importance

to us. Always and at every turn there is in their view a right and a wrong. The Powers of Light and Darkness, very variously conceived, never relinquish their contest, never sign a truce; and this is exactly what seems to them to give to the past all its value and significance. As Lord Morley puts it: "The annals of the Papacy—in some respects the most fascinating and important of all the chapters of modern history—are one thing in the hands of Pastor the Catholic, another thing to Creighton the Anglican, a third thing to Möller the Lutheran, and something again quite different to writers of more secular stamp like Gregorovius and Reumont. It is not merely difference in documents that makes the history of the French Revolution one story to Thiers or Mignet, and a story wholly different to Louis Blanc or to Taine. Talk of history being a science as loudly as ever we like, the writer of it will continue to approach his chests of archives with the bunch of keys in his hand."¹

Of Gibbon this is not perhaps always true—he could scarcely be the idol of the modern school of historians if it were—but it is true of those passages which, rightly or wrongly, have given point and power to his book. And even

¹ "Miscellanies," Fourth Series, p. 228.

Pater, although he cared little or nothing for the moral aspect of an idea or a situation, nor whether causes were lost or won, and thus on his own very limited field, and by his inimitable psychologic method, drew nearer to a scientific presentation of history¹ than many who have more directly striven after it, is yet essentially and by choice a selective historian, a literary artist,² if a passive, yet never an impassive, spectator of the past.

So that the author need make the less apology here for trying to exhibit the opinion of others without trying to conceal his own, and these essays will be lavishly repaid if they serve to awaken a living interest in some of the problems, which not so long ago appeared to be of the first moral consequence to mankind. Those, who debated them, were for the most part men of very high character and very fine intellect, and it is no fancy that there are none like them to take their places. In conclusion, the reader is asked to remember that these papers are only essays, and claim the proper privilege of essays—to be at times a little discursive.

¹ Cf. Pater, "Appreciations," p. 72.

² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

EDWARD GIBBON

1737-1794

Elia on the "Decline and Fall"—Gibbon's youth—Middleton's "Free Inquiry"—Gibbon anticipates the intellectual process of the Oxford Movement—Becomes a Roman Catholic—His later scepticism—His love-affair—His appearance—A militiaman—His prospects—The "Essai sur la Littérature"—Rome—No. 7 Bentinck Street and "La Grotte"—"The Decline and Fall"—Its significance among great histories—Its motive—Sketch of the narrative—Its merits—The influence of Christianity discussed—Finlay's view—The decline of the Roman Empire due to socialism—Gibbon as a historical artist—His style—Criticisms of his work—His auxiliaries—His failure—Place of Constantinople in his imagination—Gibbon at Lausanne—Gibbon and Pitt—The fall of the leaf—The end.

"The other, deep and slow, exhausting thought,
And hiving wisdom with each studious year,
In meditation dwelt, with learning wrought,
And shaped his weapon with an edge severe,
Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer ;
The lord of irony—that master-spell,
Which stung his foes to wrath, which grew from fear,
And doomed him to the zealot's ready hell,
Which answers to all doubts so eloquently well."

—*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, iii. 107.

"I HAVE no repugnances," says Elia.¹ "Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild

¹ "Essays of Elia, *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading*."

too low. I can read anything which I call a book. There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such. In this catalogue of books which are no books—*biblia a-biblia*—I reckon Court Calendars, Directories, Pocket Books, Draught-boards, bound and lettered on the back, Scientific Treatises, Almanacs, Statutes at large: the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and generally all those volumes which ‘no gentleman’s library should be without’: the Histories of Flavius Josephus (that learned Jew), and Paley’s Moral Philosophy. With these exceptions I can read almost anything. ✓
I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so ✓
unexcluding.”

In this imposing list, where court calendars are at the head and sombre theologians at the bottom, Elia, we should most of us agree, made only one mistake. Gibbon has no place ✓
in a company of bores. The monotonous roll of his periods is but a childish reason for shutting our ears to a voice which has many wise and witty things to say about men and events. We do not weary of the unnumbered smiles and witcheries of the majestic sea because its waves break with even fall upon the beach.

Gibbon was born in 1737, the son of that Edward Gibbon, who had William Law for a tutor, and is said to have been the original of

Flatus in the "Serious Call"¹—an easy gentleman who scurries from pastime to pastime in the comfortable conviction that each in turn will prove an inexhaustible fountain of delight. However this may be, the historian was a very different man to his father, both in respect of ability and perseverance. At Westminster, indeed, he was too ill, at Oxford too idle, to do much serious work. "The University," he said, "would as willingly renounce *him* for a son, as *he* was willing to disclaim her for a mother." Oddly enough, she is hardly in a position to do this, because, whilst in her charge, as Cotter Morison has pointed out,² he appreciated and acted upon the central thought of the leaders of the Oxford Movement in the nineteenth century.

During his fourteen months of idleness at Magdalen he read through Middleton's "Free Inquiry," which had been lately published. The purpose of the book was to show that the miracles of the fourth and fifth centuries were fully as well attested as those of the second and third; that, if the latter were believed, then on every principle of evidence the former must be; that the gulf commonly fixed between the miracles before the epoch of Constantine and the miracles after it was in fact no gulf at all. Middleton, who was a clergyman (although too

¹ "Memoirs," p. 186.

² Morison, "Gibbon," p. 14.

wealthy to have been the victim of any sordid motive), was prudent enough to stay his hand at this point and to re-entrench himself behind another gulf which he fixed in the days of Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, and Clement of Rome. These men, he said, did not record miracles. It was therefore reasonable to believe that miracles had ceased about the time of the death of St John, and, whilst we must reject all the supernatural occurrences of the second century, we might as confidently believe all that had fallen within the Apostolic age. "This man," Gibbon wrote in his journal—several years later, "was endowed with penetration and accuracy. He saw where his principles led, but he did not think proper to draw the consequences."¹

Gibbon, who was as French in his love of logic as Hobbes had been before him, drew consequences at the age of fifteen which Middleton hesitated to draw at sixty-five. It was plainly unfair to set down Irenæus and Augustine as purveyors of old wives' fables if the signs and wonders of the Gospels and the Acts were to be received without a doubt. There were only two reasonable alternatives—either to suppose that the Church had never possessed miraculous power at all, which would discredit the evidence of the most venerated saints, or to suppose that

¹ *Journal*, 24th Feb. 1764.

these powers had never been withdrawn, which was the view of the Tractarians eighty years later, and the Catholic view at the time, as always. Gibbon appreciated the force of the argument, and in the course of a lifetime chased it from end to end. His true precursor, as Leslie Stephen said,¹ was Middleton, and his conduct and his book were only a logical fulfilment of Middleton's doctrine. For a moment he occupied the Tractarian position and accepted the miracles of the Church. This was, however, only the first milestone on the road to Rome, since the strait-laced Anglican theology of the eighteenth century had no room for an immanent God, nor any belief in the continuance of supernatural powers through the Middle Ages. When Gibbon discovered that the doctrines of the third and fourth centuries were by no means Protestant, he completed his intellectual journey, came up to London, being at the time sixteen years of age, and was received into the Roman Church. Bossuet's magnificent eloquence had swept away any lingering doubts. "I . . . fell," he says, "by a noble hand."²

Flatus, if Flatus he was, had occasion for a new and unexpected excitement, and was, in fact, thoroughly alarmed. Together with the Magdalen dons, he set to work to expel the

¹ L. Stephen, "English Thought in the 18th Century," i. p. 270.

² "Memoirs," p. 70.

devil from the lunatic boy. Gibbon was exiled to the house of a Protestant pastor of the strictest sect at Lausanne, where he presently recanted his Catholicism in favour of the truths common to all the churches.¹ As no one knew then, any more than any one knows now, in what these consist, he probably found this a very commodious and comfortable half-way house. But he was far too logical to prolong his stay unnecessarily, and, after his father's death, when he had reached the conclusion that Christianity had contributed to the downfall of the Roman Empire, he quietly took up his carriages once more and became a freethinker, as indeed he had long been to all intents and purposes. "Now that he has published his infidelity," remarked Johnson, after the first volumes of the history had appeared, "he will probably persist in it."² And so he did. There is a verbal tradition that he expressed regret for his historical attack upon the Church;³ a vague letter to a favourite aunt, in which he contrasts her life of meditative retirement with the giddy bustle of the world, and says, as many an unbelieving philosopher must have done before and since, that "Religion is the best guide of youth and the best support of old age;"⁴ a passage from Ecclesiasticus (xxi.) marked in a Family Bible, perhaps by his hand, perhaps

¹ "Memoirs," p. 90.

² Boswell, "Life of Johnson," ii. p. 448.

³ Meredith-Read, "Hist. Stud. in Vaud, Berne, Savoy," ii. p. 281.

⁴ *Ibid.*

by another's—"He that is not wise will not be taught, but there is a wisdom that multiplieth bitterness"¹—and we have exhausted all the evidence that pious hands can accumulate to show that he was not so unbelieving as was supposed; unless we think it worth while to notice that some proof-engravings of religious pictures by his friend Reynolds, including that of the Seven Virtues (the design of the west window in New College Chapel) hung in his rooms at La Grotte.² Atheist, indeed, he never became, though he probably heard the wildest atheism talked at Holbach's table at Grandval. In one of the latter volumes of the "Decline and Fall," he says that the religion of Mohammed is built upon an eternal truth and a necessary fiction³—that there is one God, and that Mohammed is His Prophet. In the same mood, after describing the richness and splendour of St Sophia, he remarks, "How dull is the artifice, how insignificant the labour, if it be compared with the formation of the vilest insect that crawls upon the surface of the temple."⁴ But, for all that, the deist of the eighteenth century is the forbear of the atheist of to-day. A God that is called up to explain the existence of the world, cold, hard, and indifferent, the author but not the

¹ Meredith-Read, "Hist. Stud., etc.," p. 286.

² *Ibid.*, p. 481.

³ "Decline and Fall," v. p. 337.

⁴ *Ibid.*, iv. p. 248.

reliever of pain—who would not rather believe that the world was the outcome of chance than that anywhere there should exist a Being so powerful and so cruel! When Englishmen had grasped the real significance of Deism, they exchanged it for a nobler, if a darker, creed; and Gibbon would assuredly have gone with them. For of the facts, of which religion is the explanation, he never knew, nor cared to know, anything at all, and to the impassive intellect the sceptical hypothesis is always the more attractive of the two.

Gibbon got through the serious affairs of life very easily, much as other people get through the chicken-pox and the measles. He was past the religious crisis by eighteen, and he had settled the marriage question a year or so later. Middle. Suzanne Curchod, "the belle of Lausanne," was the daughter of a Calvinist minister. Gibbon fancied himself in love. The delusion was reciprocated, and the pair were engaged. There was, however, no money. Gibbon's father proved obdurate, and the match was therefore broken off. "I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son,"¹ says Gibbon in the imperishable sentence, which lays bare the recesses of his character. The prudent suitor and the jilted bride went their separate ways; he to become the greatest historian of his century, she to be remembered, as the wife

¹ "Memoirs," p. 107.

of the ill-starred Necker, among that strange company of common-place people on whom Fate conferred such costly but imperishable distinction. The funny little affair left no lasting soreness behind. They used to meet in Paris, and were the best of friends.

We may pause before we turn the next page of the story to look at the person of the historian. His attractions, indeed, were not numerous, but Mdle. Curchod credited him with beautiful hair, pretty hands, great originality of expression and gesture, and, as she says, "the look of a well-bred man."¹ An early and little-known portrait of him, painted at this time and photographed by General Meredith-Read at La Grotte, is all that remains to keep this memory alive. In the likeness of him by Walton at the National Portrait Gallery—a likeness which Sheffield thought the best of all—the eyes have swollen and lost their lustre, the face is grown coarse and sensual, the chin has doubled, and the expression is positively *bête*. Though he was only thirty-seven at the time it was done, he was already qualifying for the last phase at Lausanne, when he was known as the "Potato"² and paid his absurd and ungainly addresses to Madame de Crousaz and Lady Elizabeth Foster, falling on his knees, as the story goes, and

¹ Quoted in Meredith-Read, "Hist. Stud., etc.," ii. p. 329.

² *Ibid.*, p. 349.

requiring the aid of the servants to restore him to his feet ; when he would

“Bend forwards stretching his forefinger out,
And talk in phrase as round as he was round about.”¹

It may be as proper justice that clever men should be ugly as that rich men should be sickly ; but no principles of distribution can excuse the hideous countenance of the Walton portrait. From this, as from the pomposity of the Reynolds and the complacency of the Romney, it is pleasant to turn back and see him as a bright, alert, young man, agreeable enough to secure the favours of the brightest star in the *bourgeois* circle at Lausanne.

With the collapse of his engagement, the tenor of his life had been for the second time rudely distracted. But he was singularly free from bitterness, and settled down at his father's house of Buriton to a studious and comfortable bachelorhood. Variety was afforded by rooms in London and military service. In 1759 an invasion-panic had caused the revival of the militia, and Gibbon, whose home was in Hampshire, joined the local force. As usual nothing occurred, but his term of service, if it did not make him, as he supposed, an Englishman and a soldier,² made him at least a man and a capable student of strategy. “The captain of

¹ Meredith-Read, “Hist. Stud., etc.,” ii. pp. 349, 352.

² “Memoirs,” p. 138.

the Hampshire Grenadiers has not been useless to the historian of the Roman Empire."¹

All the while he was revolving his prospects. "Am I worthy," he writes in camp near Winchester, "of pursuing a walk of literature which Tacitus thought worthy of him, and of which Pliny doubted whether he was himself worthy. The part of an historian is as honourable as that of a mere chronicler or compiler of gazettes is contemptible. For which task I am fit it is impossible to know until I have tried my strength."² Subjects presented themselves only to be refused—Charles VIII. in Italy, Raleigh, Swiss Freedom, Florence under the Medicis, and many more. About this time, however, he published his "*Essai sur la Littérature*," in which he laid down the principle, not much remembered to-day, that the historian should be, in the best sense of the word, a philosopher, because the first qualification for his work is the power of perceiving the relative importance of facts.³ The "*Essai*" was of no particular merit, but being written by an Englishman, in the French language, served to make him known in Paris where he spent some time in the winter and spring of 1763. He was by this time a master of French and Latin, a passable scholar in Greek ("the language of nature and harmony"⁴) and in a

¹ "*Memoirs*," p. 138.

² Section 52.

³ *Journal*, 26th July 1761.

⁴ "*Memoirs*," p. 141.

position to make the grand tour with real advantage. Rome was reached in due course, and on the 15th October 1764, as he sat musing amid the ruins of the Capitol, while the bare-footed friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, he received the commission which, one may hope, comes to all men sooner or later. His life's work was found. "The idea," as he says, "of writing the decline and fall of the city started to my mind."¹

There was, however, to be a long interval of five years, during which he seems to have recoiled from the magnitude of his idea. He was partly busy with abortive projects for a history of Switzerland, partly with the mortal illness of his father. Most of all, he was harassed by the seeming waste of life that lay behind him, the petty distractions of the present, the uncertainty of the future. He was not envious, but uneasy.² Others were getting on; he was not. There was, however, no real cause to fear that he would make 'the great refusal,' and as soon as his duty to his father was discharged and a competence secured to himself, he settled in London. From that moment, as we may see in the relative proportions of his autobiography, the man begins to lose himself in his work.

Of his house—No. 7 Bentinck Street,³—the

¹ "Memoirs," p. 167.

² *Ibid.*, p. 170.

³ See "Letters of Edward Gibbon," i. pp. 178, 181, 183; "Memoirs," p. 218.

— porch still remains to protest against a new world of Portland cement. La Grotte, Deyverdun's place on the banks of Lac Lemane, where the "Decline and Fall" was completed, has, alas! lately disappeared, but not before every nook and cranny, every document and manuscript, had been explored by the affectionate industry of General Meredith-Read,¹ who has preserved the last memories of the spacious three-storied² house with its tapering roof, its suite of rooms on the first floor reserved to the use of the historian, its summer-house at the bottom of the garden where the last lines of the "Decline and Fall" were written, its covered walk of acacias whence on that memorable night—27th June 1787—beneath a peaceful sky lit with the full splendour of a summer moon, Gibbon looked out upon the prospect of lake and mountain, in the happiness of having accomplished his life's ambition and the sorrow of parting with an old and valued friend.³

The "Decline and Fall" took fifteen years to write (1772-1787). The author must have worked with great rapidity, but without strain. Nohow else could the result have been obtained. During part of this period, for nine years, he was supporting Lord North's ignoble administration as member for Liskeard, and later

¹ Meredith-Read, "Hist. Studies, etc.," i. c. i.

² On the south side.

³ "Memoirs," p. 225.

for Lymington, with all the cynicism of an abandoned parliamentarian. He got a post as Lord Commissioner of Trade and Plantations for his pains, and a salary of £750 a year. The Board of which he became a member was of no public service, and was eventually abolished by the Rockingham ministry under the influence of Burke, and he himself had been so much engaged in assisting his party with his vote that he forgot to assist his country with his judgment. It was altogether a disgraceful episode, but he felt no shame. "Let it suffice you to know," he wrote to Deyverdun, "that the Decline of the Two Empires, the Roman and the British, advances with equal steps. I have contributed, however, much more effectively to the former."¹ After this one is inclined to wonder whether his suggested dedication of the "Decline and Fall" to Lord North² was not a piece of irony. His own share in the public blunders was, as he said, unimportant. Too slow to be effective in debate, he thought it wiser to hold his tongue and make the House "a school of civil prudence, the first and most essential virtue of an historian."³

"Slow-witted men," says Aristotle, "have retentive memories."⁴ Gibbon knew his own strength as well as his weakness, and turned

¹ Meredith-Read, "Hist. Stud., etc.," ii. p. 424.

² Preface to "Decline and Fall," p. xii.

³ "Memoirs," p. 193.

⁴ Aristotle, "De Mem."

his energies into their proper channel. Under the influence of Voltaire¹ a new fashion in history was beginning very slowly to make its way. Sociology was struggling into life, a feeble child without a name, still swathed in the tawdry wrappings of its forerunners. Men were coming to be studied in the aggregate, and an observation of the movement of societies was soon to replace that of the achievements and adventures of heroes and kings. Hume and Robertson are commonly reckoned the pioneers of scientific history among English-speaking people. But the former had merely turned from the sensations of philosophy, which he had exhausted, to the curiosities of history, which he was casually to explore; and the latter, a greater man perhaps than we realise, had the misfortune to be incurably tedious. Their placid and spacious works have now been finally displaced, and are passing into a last neglect.

It was a great chance for the man who, to the stately English that Johnson encouraged,² should unite the notions of the new philosophy and a real sense of the grandeur of the past. At Rome Gibbon had seen something he never forgot: Hume and Robertson had never in the proper sense seen anything at all. England, besides, was ambitious of a historian of her own,

¹ See Condorcet, "Vie de Voltaire," p. 94.

² Boswell thought Gibbon had stolen his style from Johnson.

Scotsmen, then as now, possessing something more than their proper share of the intellect of the age. Gibbon seized the occasion and won an immortal name.

There can be no dispute as to the motive of the "Decline and Fall." "I believed," he remarks, "as I still believe, that the propagation of the Gospel, and the triumph of the Church are inseparably connected with the decline of the Roman monarchy."¹ "I have described," he says in the concluding epigram of the book, "the triumph of barbarism and religion."² The bare-footed friars, that is the burden of his lament, had possessed themselves of the Temple of Jupiter. It was no mere whimsical curiosity about an attack on Christianity which selected the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters as the most noticeable in the book. Susceptible, as Gibbon thought them,³ of more severe compression, desiderating, as Professor Bury thinks,⁴ a thousand reserves, they yet introduce the chief element in the drama.

A world, highly organised and intellectually brilliant as our own, had fallen, not suddenly by some strange chance, but slowly and after a prolonged trial of strength before the attacks of barbarous hordes. That was, as it seemed to Gibbon, the greatest tragedy of which history

¹ "Memoirs," p. 183.

² "Decline and Fall," vii. p. 308.

³ "Memoirs," p. 190.

Introduction to "Decline and Fall," p. xxxix.

has to tell. The barbarians alone could not have done it. For so unnatural an event there must have been an unnatural reason. That reason he found in Christianity, with its doctrines of a supernatural life and miraculous intervention. He fixed upon the miracles of the Church as the complement or object of faith, the distinctive feature, or, as he says, "merit" of the Christians.¹ What he thought of the faith, which in his view overcame, or at least undermined, the world of culture and civilisation, may be read in a famous passage at the close of the fifteenth chapter of the "Decline and Fall," where he transfers the objections of Middleton from the second to the first century. Innumerable prodigies, he remarks, had attended the coming of Christ and His apostles. The lame had walked, the blind had seen, the sick had been healed, the dead had been raised. Not the least conspicuous of the Gospel miracles had been the præternatural darkness at the Passion, when the whole world, or at least a celebrated province, was overcast with gloom for the space of three hours. None of these extraordinary events had attracted the notice of the eminent men of the age. We might draw our own conclusions.²

Christianity had lived on. The world had first despised it, then laughed at it, at last

¹ "Decline and Fall," ii. pp. 31, 32.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 70.

had persecuted it. The disdain of Tacitus, the mockery of Lucian, the angry violence of Diocletian, had been spent in vain. In the end the world had submitted, drunk the cup to the dregs, and taken the slow poison into its blood. This was the theory of which the "Decline and Fall" was a masterly exposition.

Gibbon was, however, too brilliant a controversialist, too honest a historian, ever to be afraid of the facts. He points out with perfect fairness in his opening volume that so early as Commodus luxury and security had eaten deep into Roman character. Yet even so the innuendo runs against the Church. She had come to bring virtue, but the virtue she brought was not *virtus*. Rome—that was the shame of it—could not face her foes so well as before. Neither the milk nor the meat of the Church had sufficed to restore as fine a race as once had been. And when he comes to speak of the adornment of Constantinople by its founder he recalls with cynical amusement the remark of the historian, Cedrenus, "that nothing seemed wanting except the souls of the illustrious men, whom those admirable monuments were intended to represent."¹ And he has much to say of all the theological controversies by which the Roman Empire was little by little torn to fragments — of schisms between Arian - Goth

¹ "Decline and Fall," ii. p. 151.

and Catholic-Roman, Pope and Patriarch, Pope and Emperor, Iconoclast and Iconodule, between Nestorian and Coptic nationalists in Syria and Egypt and the Imperial Government at Constantinople. With his feet planted always in Rome and Constantinople¹ he follows the decaying fortunes of those cities, and closes the book suddenly when the one has fallen finally under the dominion of the Church, and the other is trampled beneath the heel of the Turks. Before superstition and barbarism the glories of the Roman Empire had for ever passed away. "The spider *had* woven his web in the Imperial palace, and the owl *had* sung her watch-song on the towers of Afrasiab."² The words which rose to the lips of Mohammed the Conqueror, as he rode across the Hippodrome, haunt us still as from the Capitol we make our last survey of the ruins of pagan Rome, falling away so rapidly before time and Christianity and convenience.³ Yet it is the decline and not the fall of the Roman Empire that we have witnessed. The succession of the Cæsars was only relinquished, as Mr Bryce⁴ has taught us all, in 1806.

"The author himself," says Gibbon, "is the best judge of his own performance. No one has so deeply meditated the subject; no one

¹ Preface to "Decline and Fall," p. xiv.

² "Decline and Fall," vii. p. 199.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

⁴ Bryce, "Holy Roman Empire."

is so sincerely interested in the event."¹ None the less, very many criticisms, pleasant and unpleasant, have been passed upon his work from the filthy and foolish abuse of Whitaker² down to Newman's sunny and beautiful reply.³ Cotter Morison has drawn attention to the peculiar excellence of the geographical pieces;⁴ Stanley has given special praise to the accounts of the heretical churches of the East;⁵ Bosworth Smith⁶ and Professor Margoliouth⁷ notice the eloquence and insight of his biography of Mohammed; foreigners were quick to value and utilise his summary of Roman law;⁸ fair-minded men have set much store by his moderation in dealing with Julian the Apostate.⁹ It is mostly, and perhaps inevitably, where he paints with a broad brush that there has been room for complaint. Professor Oman¹⁰ blames the inadequacy of his account of the Byzantine Empire as others have blamed his confused record of the Crusades.¹¹ Yet Professor Bury is there to assure us that "if we take into

¹ "Miscellaneous Works," i. p. 220 (quoted in Boswell's "Johnson," iv. p. 251).

² Whitaker, "Review of Gibbon, vols. iv. v. vi.," p. 286.

³ Newman, "Grammar of Assent," p. 462.

⁴ "Gibbon," p. 107.

⁵ "Eastern Church," p. 5.

⁶ Smith, "Mohammed and Mohammedanism."

⁷ Margoliouth, "Mohammed," Preface.

⁸ See Cotter-Morison, "Gibbon," p. 154; Bury, Introduction to "Decline and Fall," p. lii.

⁹ Bury, Introduction to "Decline and Fall," p. xl.

¹⁰ Oman, "Byzantine Empire," Preface.

¹¹ Morison, "Gibbon," p. 164.

account the vast range of his work, his accuracy is amazing."¹

About the origin of Christianity and its place in the world's history Gibbon started a debate, some of the echoes of which will resound in the pages of this book. Newman suggested to him that faith, hope, and charity were a better explanation of the success of Christianity than his five reasons,² and Church remarked that Christianity was a more wonderful thing if it was not true than if it were.³ These were theological answers, although the Oxford leaders gave them a wealth of historical illustration. Finlay wrote from a different standpoint, and gave an equally confident traverse. He was in every way the antithesis of Gibbon; a single-hearted Liberal, who had been associated with Byron in the War of Greek Independence; an economist, who held that the prosperity of the people was the proper business of the historian; and a man of genuine simplicity who had no taste for show, but moved by instinct among the elemental forces of national life. His "History of Greece" is really a critical essay upon the theme of the "Decline and Fall." Christianity, he maintained, did not accelerate the downfall; it retarded it.

"It appears certain," he says, "that the Latin

¹ Bury, "Gibbon," p. xli.

² Newman, "Grammar of Assent," p. 462.

³ Church, "Human Life and its Conditions," p. 81.

provinces were ruined by the strong conservative attachment of the aristocracy of Rome to the forgotten forms and forsaken superstitions of paganism, after they had lost all practical influence on the minds of the people; while there can be very little doubt that the Eastern provinces were saved by the unity with which all ranks embraced Christianity."¹

More recent historians than Finlay take the same view. Professor Ramsay, following Mommsen, goes so far as to say that

"Christianity was in reality not the enemy but the friend of the Empire, that the Empire grew far stronger when the Emperors became Christian, that the religious attitude of the earlier centuries was a source of weakness rather than of strength."²

Finlay made a cognate point by drawing attention to the immense services of Leo the Isaurian and the Isaurian dynasty, not only to the Byzantine Empire, but to civilisation. From Gibbon's account one might infer that the East suffered a steady decline in courage and virtue. The reverse was the truth. Under Constantine Copronymus — the son of Leo — the masses enjoyed a singular prosperity. The Eastern Empire had undergone a complete regeneration — political, financial, military, and religious³ — and the real period of decline did not begin until the days of Isaac Comnenus, about the time

¹ "History of Greece," i. p. 138.

² Ramsay, "Church in the Roman Empire," p. 192.

³ Finlay, "History of Greece," ii. pp. 55, 56.

when William the Conqueror overran England. Leo by his great ability averted a European catastrophe, and prevented the Roman Empire from falling under the dominion of the Prophet. Charles Martel, thanks to the vanity of the Frankish writers, earned an eternal fame by repelling a Saracen raid.

In another direction Gibbon was guilty of some injustice. The decrees of the Œcumenical Councils can be satisfactorily shown to have been no more than restatements of primitive doctrine in dogmatic language.¹ Gibbon makes it appear as if the conflict were between rival dogmas of equal novelty. Carlyle, who in his time had made merry over the proceedings at Nicea, came at last to recognise that monotheism had all the while been at stake.²

To what, then, it may be asked, if not to Christianity, was due the fall of civilisation before the hordes of the barbarians? Modern research returns no uncertain answer. Socialism has sharpened the eyes of our historians,³ and in the economic conditions of the third century they have begun to discern the prototype of our own. The Roman nobility had not survived the proscriptions of the last century before Christ. The

¹ See Balfour, "Foundations of Belief," pp. 377, 378.

² Froude, "Carlyle's Life in London," ii. p. 462.

³ Finlay, "History of Greece," see especially i. pp. 91, 104; Waltzing, "Corporations Professionelles"; Flinders Petrie, "Janus in Modern Life," ch. iii.; Dill, "Roman Society in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries," bk. iii. ch. ii.

factitious aristocracy which sat in their seats was a model of all that an aristocracy ought not to be. They had few duties and wanted none. Comfort they mistook for prosperity, and luxury for culture. They toyed with literature, with the result that in Gibbon's phrase "a crowd of critics, compilers, and commentators darkened the face of learning."¹ Partly from impotence, partly from selfishness, they left the empire to drift. Social solidarity became an idle dream. The proletariat was all-powerful, and the empire liberal perforce.

Rulers have to be kept in good temper, be they many or few. If they are few the process is inexpensive; if they are many the process becomes costly. In the days of the Roman Empire 'panem et circenses' was no idle catchword, but a very present reality. The people required to be fed, housed, and amused without paying for it. It was a large order and entailed liberal measures of spoliation. Employers were compelled to associate in unions. Each union was then compelled to ply its trade for the benefit of the poor at a less rate than the cost of production. The larger employers were required to do more of this unremunerative work than the smaller. Finally, they were not allowed to take their capital out of their business. Diocletian's legislation threw that of Aurelian into the shade. Wages

¹ "Decline and Fall," i. p. 58.

and prices were fixed by law. Ability went to the wall, and political economy was banished to Saturn. In municipal government it was the same. The rich paid the piper; the poor called for the tune. The *curiales* — the city and suburban corporations—were personally responsible for the levy of heavy contributions, the greater part of which was devoted to a satisfaction of the demands of the imperial exchequer in the matter of revenue and of the locality in the matter of shows. They were not allowed to escape their duties, and the fell inheritance passed from father to son.

The end of these things was slow in coming, but certain enough. Class preyed upon class. Public spirit took to its wings. The government grew to be detested or disliked, and home rule, whether under some Roman governor enjoying the shadow of the imperial title, or some barbarian, smoothed over with a veneer of Christianity and offering an unsubstantial deference to the Emperor, seemed no uncompensated misfortune.

The tendencies, here loosely summarised without too nice a regard for chronology (as is pardonable in an essay, and particularly one on Gibbon, who is not too nice in the matter himself) were developed between the third century and the fifth, and constitute the real reply to the innuendo of the "Decline and Fall." A kind of

mystical security seemed to all men to hang around the Roman Empire. The calamity of an utter dissolution seemed always very far away. Roman citizens were convinced that the fabric had lasted so long as to be immortal, indestructible, eternal.¹ This belief obtained to the bitter end. Even the huddled crowd of refugees in Saint Sophia, when the Turks were streaming into the city, confidently awaited a divine intervention—an angel from heaven, who should drive the enemy back to the frontiers of Persia.

The majesty of the Roman Empire, and the pathos of its decay, exactly suited the cast of Gibbon's imagination, and he created a style capable of conveying his thoughts to his readers. Any one can see that he was a consummate artist. It is the supreme excellence of his work that his manner precisely balances the weight of his subject; that all his conclusions are embalmed in choice and appropriate aromas. The Cæsars pass before our eyes in their long procession like the Sultans in the *Rubaiyat*, each bearing his load of splendour, so alluring in its appearance of immeasurable dominion and dazzling opportunity; yet the mind is never for an instant forgetful of that age-long fabric of Empire, a mere empty shell crumbling into ruin, yet still infinitely impressive in its power to strike terror

¹ *Cp.* Dill, "Roman Society in the Fifth Century," p. 147.

into the wandering tribes of west and north by its name alone.

“Think in this battered caravanseraï
Whose doorways are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultan after Sultan with his pomp,
Abode his hour or two and went his way.”¹

Gibbon's style expresses it all perfectly. Behind every paragraph, behind many a phrase, there is the sense of the majesty of form, of the factitious power of antiquated institution and bygone custom to mould men's habit and imprison their life. A fine example occurs towards the end of the third chapter.

“The slave of imperial despotism, whether he was condemned to drag his gilded chain in Rome and the Senate, or to wear out a life of exile on the barren rock of Seriphus, or the frozen banks of the Danube, accepted his fate in silent despair. To resist was fatal, and it was impossible to fly.”

Sound and sense combine for the effect. The hopeless victim is not more present to the mind than the monstrous system, with a hundred eyes and a hundred hands, in whose grip he writhes.

The style is, of course, very artificial. It needed to be so, in order to reflect the movement of an institution which had itself become the embodiment of artifice. Fortunately for Gibbon the society of his own time, like the society of the “Decline and Fall,” sustained its existence very

¹ *Omar Khayyam.*

generally upon externals — upon ceremonies, bows, conventions, upon a philosophy of clothes ; he himself did not disdain to rejoice over 'the handsome liveries' of the lackeys he engaged to stand behind his coach in Paris.¹ It was the perfect moment to acquire the manner that was best suited to his work.²

Yet even so he found it necessary to write the first chapters of his work more than once before he could get the effect he desiderated. Afterwards the style must have become second nature. The recurring periods roll smoothly off his pen, nor does he ever seem to tire of their endless revolution. Unfortunately the twentieth century reader, a feeble and pampered creature, needing to be constantly awoken by something abrupt or paradoxical, is less well satisfied. For Gibbon is lucid but not lively. With all his marvellous capacity of arranging facts, he cannot illuminate them. As Sainte - Beuve says : " Il excelle à analyser et à déduire les parties compliquées de son sujet mais il ne les rassemble jamais sous un point de vue soudain et sous une expression de génie." ³

Bagehot made another and far more subtle criticism. Gibbon's style was, he said, one in which you could not tell the truth. "A monotonous writer is suited only to monotonous matter. Truth

¹ Prothero, "The Letters of Edward Gibbon," i. p. 313.

² Bagehot makes a great deal of this—"Literary Studies," ii. p. 36.

³ "Causeries du Lundi-Gibbon."

is of various kinds — grave, solemn, dignified, petty, low, ordinary.”¹ This is so true as to be often forgotten. Style is an excellent servant, but a bad master. Gibbon is admirable, so long as he is busy with the showy parts of his subject — the intrigues of the palace and the Cabinet, the Cæsar in court or camp, the appearance of any new people of strange habits — just such matters as would deserve the attention, and amuse the ear of a well-bred man of the eighteenth century. Tacitus, “the first of historians,” as he calls him, “who applied the science of philosophy to the study of facts”² — had narrated these sort of things to the court of Trajan. When Gibbon comes in contact with the base things of the world and the things that are despised — the condition of the proletariat, the laws of political economy, the rise of the Christians — he is as ineffective as his famous pagan model.³ Yet into these things also, if he is to do his work, the historian must learn to enter. Gibbon paid for his neglect in his judgment. That deeper insight into contemporary events, which the study of history ought to give, was never his, and the French Revolution, which Chesterfield had foretold as early as 1753, took him entirely by surprise.

¹ Bagehot, “Literary Studies,” ii. p. 37.

² “Decline and Fall,” i. p. 213.

³ For Gibbon on Tacitus see especially, “*Essai sur la Litt.*, sec. lii. ; “Decline and Fall,” i. pp. 195, 213.

By a curious irony the two men, to whom he owed the most, belonged to that inspired company of laymen, who practised the extremest asceticism at the manor house of Les Granges in emulation of the nuns of Port Royal, and were the ardent admirers of all that Gibbon detested. From Pascal, whose "Provincial Letters" he read over almost every year,¹ he derived his power of sarcasm, and something, perhaps, of the foreign flavour of his writing: from Le Nain de Tillemont he took a great part of his information.² He got, indeed, too much enjoyment out of his ironical commentaries ever to approach the delicate finish of Pascal's satire, and with them there came the dangerous habit, which Mackintosh notes,³ of insinuating instead of relating; but the wounds he inflicts are trenchant and apt to fester. No one experienced a more complacent satisfaction in exposing mean motives and low aims. "History," he thought, "was little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind."⁴

It was a low estimate, and it drew its penalty behind it. Incidentally, as we have seen, he had to deal with the origins of Christianity and, in so doing, he suffered the greatest disgrace that can befall an historian. He observed and recorded facts, the significance of which entirely

¹ "Memoirs," p. 97.

² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

³ "Life of Mackintosh," ii. p. 476.

⁴ "Decline and Fall," i. p. 77.

escaped him. The purity, the enthusiasm, the calm serenity of the Primitive Church passed before his eyes. He treated of them with the same cold and critical indifference as he meted out to the vices of Elagabalus; unaware, apparently, that he was reviewing the rise of a movement, the like of which had never been seen before, nor ever will be again while time is. It is not that he misstates facts, but that the facts as we know them admit of two possible explanations, and that he has preferred to adopt, apparently without a shadow of regret, the baser one. Fifty years later, from the pulpit of St Mary's, Newman surveyed the same ground with an eye trained to discern spiritual things.

The works of Le Nain de Tillemont were Gibbon's note-book. In a laborious life of sixty years the Port Royalist had put together several heavy tomes, containing the lives of the Saints and the history of the Emperors in the first five centuries. The one is a kind of forerunner of the "Dictionary of Christian Biography," the other is conceived on the principle of the "Annual Register." Neither is readable; both are accurate. To Gibbon they must have been of priceless value. When Tillemont forsakes him, he adopts a new method on the plea that a continuance of the old would be tedious,¹ and packs the history of eight centuries into half the

¹ "Decline and Fall," v. p. 169.

space he had before allocated to five. It is a cardinal defect, indeed, in the "Decline and Fall," that it has no uniform proportions, that it shows as it were the work of two architects. The ingenuity and resource of the workman have concealed the defects of the design. No proper attempt is made to realise the idea of the mediæval empire, the constructive result of the concussion of Christianity and Roman imperialism; there is not so much as a mention of Dante's "De Monarchia." At the turn of the book, with the eye of an artist, but not of a historian, Gibbon virtually abandons the west to depict the tragedy in the east.

Constantinople had always a peculiar fascination for him, and his famous description of it in the seventeenth chapter contains the nearest approach to poetic enthusiasm of which he was capable. Yet the story of its downfall is the masterpiece of his skill. One by one in successive chapters the nations group themselves around the devoted city—Arabs, Bulgarians, Northmen, Venetians, Latin Crusaders, Moguls, Turks—each picking off a few provinces from the Imperial dominion, or weakening the defence on this side or that, until amid the blare and flash of cannon (for that generation of men a new and terrible discovery) the metropolis of the East, encompassed by armies on land and sea, passed with all its wonderful adornments,

with all its costly spoil, under the hand of Mohammed the Conqueror ; that great city that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet.

Gibbon finished the "Decline and Fall" in 1787. It was, as he said, the everlasting farewell of an old and agreeable companion. Whatever, he reflected, might be the life of his history, his own must be short and precarious.¹ He had, in fact, just over six years to live.

The move to Lausanne was never regretted. He was in Paradise although alone there.² We may entertain, with Miss Holroyd,³ an uncomfortable suspicion that the creeping things over whom he bore rule included a certain proportion of flatterers. If it was so, Sheffield's visit in 1791 must have been a wholesome as well as a pleasant variety. For the rest these years of well-deserved idleness were spent in the composition of his autobiography. It was written in six fragments, each incomplete, and confided by his will to the care of Sheffield, who, with the help of Hayley, the poet,⁴ and possibly of Miss Holroyd,⁵ picked out the plums, washed them free of some impurities, and served

¹ "Memoirs," p. 225.

² *Ibid.*, p. 236.

³ Adeane, "Girlhood of Maria Josepha, Lady Stanley of Alderley," p. 63.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

⁵ The present Lord Sheffield in his introduction to the autobiographies of Edward Gibbon states this as a fact. It would be interesting to know the evidence. Miss Holroyd's letters do not give a corresponding impression.

them up as the "Memoirs of Edward Gibbon." The style was exactly that of the author's conversation,¹ so that he lives in them as really as Johnson lives in Boswell, and we may fancy ourselves spectators of that famous supper-party at Lincoln's Inn in 1780, when Pitt, then just a gawky youth of twenty-one, successfully disputed his conclusions and sent him flying from the room.

"His conversation," said the host on that memorable occasion, "was not . . . what Dr Johnson would have called talk. There was no interchange of ideas, for no one had a chance of replying" (Pitt, as we see, had broken the rules), "so fugitive, so variable, was his mode of discoursing, which consisted of points, anecdotes and epigrammatic thrusts, all more or less to the purpose, and all pleasantly said with a French air and manner which gave them great piquancy, but which were withal so desultory and unconnected that, though each separately was extremely amusing, the attention of his auditors sometimes flagged before his own resources were exhausted."²

This is a digression, but we are close on the end of the piece. Other friends had been leaving him besides his book; Deyverdun, the companion of his early manhood, in whose house he had been a guest; De Sévery, his most intimate neighbour; his aunt, Mrs Porten; Lady Sheffield,

¹ Adeane, "Girlhood of Maria Josepha, Lady Stanley of Alderley," p. 273.

² "The Bland-Burges Papers," p. 60.

the wife of his friend. The last event took him back to England to discharge the offices of friendship. He was in no state physically to perform a journey, which the French Revolution made daily more perilous; but from all we know of him he may well have felt with Laelius in Cicero's beautiful dialogue that, as well for those who delight in knowledge and learning as for those who give themselves up to public business, life is nothing—cannot even be got through respectably—without friendship, which insinuates itself into the circumstances of all men, and allows no manner of life to continue without it.¹ For his own part, he accepted the falling of the leaves with a stoical calm. But he was grown impossibly corpulent and operations delayed, but did not dispel the evil. He died in 1794, complacent, jesting, worldly, courageous to the end. The last passages, so carefully preserved by Sheffield, leave, indeed, a rather disagreeable impression. The best men go reverently to their long home. Still, it was not inappropriate as it was. "*Populus Romanus moritur et ridet.*"² The Roman people went laughing to the grave.

¹ "*De Amicit.,*" xxiii.

² Salvian, "*De Gub.,*" vii. 6. "*Sardonice quoddammodo herbis omnem Romanum populum putes esse saturatum: moritur et ridet.*"

AUTHORITIES

Bury's edition (1900) of the "Decline and Fall," Birkbeck Hill's edition of the "Memoirs," and Prothero's "Private Letters of Edward Gibbon," have been used in compiling this article.

There is a life of Gibbon by Cotter Morison in the English Men of Letters series, and an excellent essay on him by Bagehot in "Literary Studies," vol. i. Birkbeck Hill has collected a vast amount of information about and criticism upon him in the above-mentioned edition of the "Memoirs."

Sainte-Beuve ("Causeries du Lundi"), Leslie Stephen ("Studies of a Biographer"), and Mr Birrell ("Collected Essays," vol. ii.), have also written essays on him, and there are, of course, the introductory remarks of Guizot, Milman, and Bury, to their respective editions of the "Decline and Fall."

Gibbon's relations with Madame Necker are treated of in D'Haussonville's "Le Salon de Madame Necker"; his relations with the Holroyds in Adeane's "Girlhood of Maria Josepha, Lady Stanley of Alderley."

The two periods of his residence at Lausanne are exhaustively treated in Meredith-Read's "Historic Studies in Vaud, Berne, and Savoy."

Scattered references to him will be found in Boswell's "Johnson," and Horace Walpole's "Memoirs." The "Bland-Burges Papers" contain the account of his passage with Pitt.

The conflicting criticisms of some eminent men on the "Decline and Fall," will be found in Appendix 57 of Birkbeck Hill's edition of the "Memoirs."

J. H. NEWMAN

1801-1890

The "Character of a Gentleman," the touchstone of Newman's doctrines—And the cause of his secession—The conditions precedent to the Oxford Movement—Keble—Hurrell Froude—J. A. Froude's description of Newman—The "Assize Sermon"—The Hadleigh meeting: Pusey—The Four o'Clock Sermons at St Mary's; Newman's style of preaching—The Heads of Houses and the Bishops; "The Three Defeats"—The Jerusalem bishopric—The young Catholic party; W. G. Ward—Newman's difficulties—Littlemore—The crisis: within—The crisis: without—The last act—The intellectual development of Newman's mind—(a) The historical argument embodied in the "Essays on Miracles"; (b) The ecclesiastical argument embodied in the "Prophetical Office of the Church." Newman's conception of the Church. Anglicanism "unambitious" of it. Summary of the "Via Media of the Anglican Church." The rider attached to it; (c) The doctrinal argument embodied in the "Essay on the Development of Doctrine." Its value. The biological test. Leslie Stephen's criticism discussed. Mozley's criticism. A philosophy of History. (d) The theological argument. The inspiration of the Church—Newman as a Roman Catholic—The basis of religious belief; "A Grammar of Assent"—Newman and the Modernists—Conclusion of the "Grammar of Assent"—Newman's life in the Church of Rome—Pusey's Eirenicon—Gladstone's pamphlet—The "Achilli" case—The disagreement with Manning—The occasion of the "Apologia"—The "Apologia"—Newman's style: its place in English literature—Newman as a historian—The bitterness of his satire; his severity—The "Dream of Gerontius"—Newman's foresight—The Cardinalate—The end—Criticisms—The charge of scepticism—The charge of credulity—Conclusion.

"Irresistible as the proof seems to him to be, so as even to master and carry away the intellect as soon as it is stated, so that Catholicism is almost its own evidence, yet it requires, as the great philosopher of antiquity reminds us, as being a moral proof, a rightly-disposed recipient."

("Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England," p. x.)

IN one of his early sermons,¹ preached before the University of Oxford in 1832, Newman pointed to the author of the "Decline and Fall" as a master in that school of sceptical culture, which he did not hesitate to identify as the anti-Christ of the future. And twenty years later, writing as a Roman Catholic, he reverted to Gibbon's sympathetic portrait of Julian the Apostate as a perfect illustration of an early stage in the development of that finished man of the world, whom the world itself had fashioned so cunningly after the manner of a Christian hero, that the very elect were deceived, and who is indeed very commonly delineated in his final perfection (without too much suspicion, perhaps, of the author's real opinion of him) by the aid of Newman's own just, beautiful, but gently ironical portrait of a gentleman.² For it is, as Newman perceives, of the essence of a gentleman—of one who is that and no more—to be great in small situations and deficient in the supreme moments of life. Pilate and Gallio and Agrippa were gentlemen, and they missed their opportunities because they were just that and nothing beyond it.

¹ "Oxford Univ. Sermon," p. 126.

² "Idea of a Univ.," p. 209.

Like their modern antitypes, they hated scenes, emotion, extravagance; they feared ridicule and disliked responsibility; they avoided clashing opinions and colliding sentiments; they would have been puzzled to see anything admirable in such controversial utterances as are recorded in the seventh and eighth chapters of St John's Gospel. They made, in fact, no ventures, and their accomplishments died with them.

Newman was far too clear sighted to confound a type of character which in its excellencies and its defects appeals peculiarly to the English temper with that other type which came into the world with Christ. He saw that the gentleman, considered as such, worships only (if he worships at all) "a deduction of his reason or a creation of his fancy,"¹ while the other is from the first in the presence of a Person, to whom all thoughts and actions are referred for praise or blame. And this antithesis, so naturally veiled by the forms and traditions of the English Church, that it still, to a great extent, escapes the eye of the educated Englishman, was in the opinion of the most competent of his critics,² the key that unlocked the lowest door of the treasure-house in his deep-seated being. He could not find in a society, which, in its efforts after Christianity, never lost sight of culture and social order, anything that would remind him of the

¹ "Idea of a Univ.," p. 211.

² Dean Church.

shepherdless multitudes that went out to seek Christ on the hills of Galilee,¹ nor in the trimming diplomacy of an Established Church, which sails always a little behind the times, an ark strong enough to protect the Kingdom of God against the all-invading flood of Liberal thought.²

There are one or two recollections of Newman's boyhood which strike the imagination with rare force—the childish games with Benjamin Disraeli in Bloomsbury Square;³ the early drawing of a rosary in a school verse-book, long afterwards unearthed during the crisis at Littlemore;⁴ the resolution at the age of fifteen to lead a celibate life.⁵ And it is plain, from his own account of his childhood, that he was a born solitary, very far removed in temper from the beautiful motto of his Cardinalate—"Cor ad cor loquitur." One is often reminded of that meeting of his, in the early days of his Fellowship, with the Provost of Oriel, when the Provost made him a kindly bow and said: "Nunquam minus solus quam cum solus."⁶

Every great career, of course, has what we call its accidents. It was the accident of his that he came to manhood at one of those exciting moments in the life of a nation when its youth is casting about for a new enthusiasm. The

¹ Church, "Occasional Papers," ii. p. 473.

² *Ibid.*

³ Hutton, "Cardinal Newman," p. 16.

⁴ "Apologia," p. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Napoleonic Wars were long enough over to have lost their glamour, and the movement for reform, which had been set back by the excesses of the Revolution, was rising once more in its strength. Liberalism came out after the death of Lord Liverpool like the winter-floods after the November rains. Reforms whirled about the three kingdoms. Irish bishoprics, established by law, came toppling down. Catholics, as English Churchmen were accustomed to call them, lost their disabilities. Bishops were bidden put their house in order. Even "the sacred fabric of the constitution," so zealously repaired by Burke forty years earlier, was seen to be swaying.

In quiet Oxford there was, as there has always been since, a body of advanced opinion, strong enough to attract a certain amount of intellectual interest, not strong enough to overthrow the conservative genius of the place. The time was one, as the advertisement to the "Christian Year" reminds us, "of much leisure and unbounded curiosity," and the reception accorded to that beautiful little book is the proper measure of the spiritual energy that was seeking an outlet. The harbinger of the Catholic Revival (whether or not the critics are right in condemning its verse) was at least perfect in tone and temper. Parties in the Church could forget themselves in its awful, ever-present sense of that which lay beyond party. Sectarianism was cajoled to sleep

by its simple melodies. Even Lord Chancellor Eldon, stoutest of Protestants, thought well to present a copy of it, still extant, to his grandson. Yet for all this, in the conventional phrase, the calm was that which foretold a storm.

Keble, indeed, as Newman was afterwards at pains to show, was beyond question the first parent of the coming change. [One of the many beautiful things in the "Apologia" is the description extracted years later from a contemporary letter, of Newman's reception by the Fellows of Oriel on his election to a fellowship. "I bore it," he had written, "till Keble took my hand, and then felt so abashed and unworthy of the honour done me, that I seemed desirous of quite sinking into the ground."] Keble, as if conscious of the impending tempest, had withdrawn even before the publication of the "Christian Year" into the country parish, where in the main he spent his life; he would have hated, even if he could have borne, the accidents of controversy. To one of his pupils—a born ecclesiastic in the better as well as the worse sense of the term—he passed on his convictions and beliefs¹ with more than a double measure of his spirit. When this keen intellect joined Newman at Oriel the elements were mixed, and the skies began to lour.

Hurrell Froude is without doubt the most

¹ Church, "Oxford Movement," pp. 26, 27; "Apologia," p. 23.

romantic figure in the Movement. Dean Church thought of him as a Pascal¹ come to life in the nineteenth century, and Dr Abbott, the pitiless critic of Newmanism, picked him out as the real instigator of the whole wonderful tragedy, the mediævalist who, even in death, by the legacy of the Roman Breviary, led Newman away from the Primitive Church to which he really belonged.² Nor would Newman himself have denied it. Hurrell, he said, was the author, if any one was, of "the Movement altogether,"³ that is of the Roman conclusion of it. We can think about this as we please. What we need to know is that Newman never had another friend like this one, so beautiful, so intense, brilliant, fiercely intellectual, profound in his self-abasement.

We have glanced at Froude; we may as well look at Newman's exterior before we pass on to look into his mind. The liveliest description of him, and perhaps the best, was written by one who had peculiar opportunities of observation but was never entirely fascinated, Hurrell's brother, Anthony, the historian.

"Newman was above the middle height, slight and spare. His head was large, his face remarkably like that of Julius Cæsar. The forehead, the shape of the ears and nose, were almost the

¹ Church, "Oxford Movement," p. 56

² Abbott, "Anglican Career," p. 177.

³ Newman, "Diff. of Anglicans," i. p. 36.

same. The lines of the mouth were very peculiar, and I should say exactly the same. I have often thought of the resemblance, and believed that it extended even to the temperament. In both there was an original force of character which refused to be moulded by circumstances, which was to make its own way, and become a power in the world; a clearness of intellectual perception, a disdain for conventionalities, a temper imperious and wilful, but along with it a most attaching gentleness, sweetness, singleness of heart and purpose. Both were formed by nature to command others, both had the faculty of attracting to themselves the passionate devotion of their friends and followers, and in both cases, too, perhaps the devotion was rather due to the personal ascendancy of the leader than to the cause which he represented. It was Cæsar, not the principle of the empire, which overthrew Pompey and the constitution. 'Credo in Newmannum' was a common phrase at Oxford, and is still unconsciously the faith of nine-tenths of the English converts to Rome."¹

Froude, with his usual cunning, has led us on past our point, but the comparison to Cæsar, physically if not intellectually true, is worth all the more precise attempts of others to make Newman live again for a later generation. He was at any rate the dictator of that beautiful city, which, as Dean Church said,² had at the distance of over three centuries revived in its parties and

¹ J. A. Froude, "The Oxford Counter Reformation" in "Short Studies."

² Church, "Oxford Movement," ch. ix.

its enthusiasms the Florence of the Middle Ages. With the by-play of the Movement, indeed, we have here no proper concern. Gossip is still gossip, even when the subjects of it are men of singular austerity. But for the elucidation of what is to follow, it is necessary to throw the eye along the chain of events.

Newman has fixed the birthday of the Movement on the 14th July 1833.¹ It was, as we hardly need to remind ourselves, the anniversary of the capture of the Bastille, the commemoration of the Movement which had sent kings and priests, consecrated with holy rites, flying from their benefices. Newman himself was just back from the memorable journey to Sicily, when he had nearly lost his life by a fever, and had written the most pathetically beautiful of all English hymns—"Lead kindly light." As he entered Oxford health and spirits overtook him in a flood. A few days after, on the eventful 14th, Keble preached the Assize Sermon; a political sermon aimed at Lord Grey and the Liberal Ministry. Disestablishment, English or Irish, was, the preacher urged in effect, a repudiation of divine governance, and the nation which admitted it apostate. His words were only the echo of the audacious, yet as it proved not misplaced, motto which Froude and Newman

¹ "Apologia," p. 35.

had chosen for the "Lyra Apostolica" during the Italian journey:—

"Γνοίεν δ' ὡς δὴ δηρὸν ἐγὼ πολέμοιο πέπαυμαι." ¹

"They shall know the difference now that I am back again," says Achilles to Thetis, when rage at the death of Patroclus brings him once more into battle; and the speech was not unsuited to a conflict which was to cause so many wounds, and leave so many ugly scars behind.

The Assize Sermon was followed by a meeting at Hadleigh, of which Taylor, one of the Protestant martyrs of the Reformation, had once been Rector. Hurrell Froude was there in person; Newman and Keble only in spirit. The others were Rose, William Palmer, and Perceval—names now almost forgotten, but, two of them at least, at that time of considerable weight. A plan of campaign was decided upon, and accordingly in the following September Newman published the first "Tract for the Times." The pamphlet was just a simple exhortation to consider the form and meaning of the Ordination Services, and the implications which they contain of an apostolic succession; a thesis very familiar to-day, very novel then. A year later Pusey joined the agitators and gave his name to a party, of which he was beyond all doubt the most learned member. He gave some-

¹ *Iliad*, xviii. l. 125.

thing even more valuable in a tract on the meaning and purpose of Baptism, which appeared soon after his adhesion. There could be no doubt, after that, that the Tractarians were a force to be reckoned with.

In the wrangle over the latitudinarian appointment of Dr Hampden to the Professorship of Divinity, they were supposed to have won a petty victory; in the erection of the Martyrs' Memorial (the martyrs being the Protestant dignitaries who were burnt there) they suffered a petty defeat. In the meanwhile, Newman's "Parochial and Plain Sermons" at St Mary's had taken the undergraduate world by storm. They united, as it is almost needless to repeat, a simple earnestness of expression with a profound knowledge of the human heart. Good men, as they heard him, resolved to forsake all and follow Christ; worldlings went shuddering away like Felix, after Paul had reasoned with him.¹ Two sermons in particular were long read and remembered: "Holiness necessary for Future Blessedness," and "The Ventures of Faith." Froude has described the tremendous emotion produced in the hearers by a sermon on the sufferings of Christ.² An admirable piece of psychology, based no doubt on Butler's famous

¹ Abbott, "Anglican Career," ii. p. 2.

² "Parochial and Plain Sermons," vol. vi. Sermon vi. *The Incarnate Son a Sufferer and Sacrifice*. Cp. Froude's, "The Oxford Counter Reformation."

sermon on the same subject, is contained in the sermon on Balaam,

“a man divinely favoured, visited, influenced, guided, protected, eminently honoured, illuminated—a man possessed of an enlightened sense of duty and of moral and religious acquirements, educated, high - minded, conscientious, honourable, firm; and yet on the side of God’s enemies, personally under God’s displeasure, and in the end (if we go on to that) the direct instrument of Satan, and having his portion with the unbelievers.”¹

If Newman’s sermons were delivered to-day, they would not be popular. People approve “nice, bright sermons,” adulterated with cheap solutions of grave religious difficulties. But great preachers rarely stray from St Paul’s topics—sin and righteousness and judgment—and Newman is no exception. M. Bremond has noticed that the essential difference between his presentation of a subject and that of any great French preacher — Massillon, Bossuet, Lacordaire — lies in his preference for particular, rather than general treatment.² Bossuet will take “Providence” as his subject, and fill in a large canvas with broad dashes of colour. Newman’s theological and moral teaching falls naturally, like the scenery of his own country,³ into vignettes. Thus, for

¹ “Parochial and Plain Sermons,” iv. p. 26. *Obedience without Love*.

² Bremond, “Mystery of Newman,” p. 197.

³ A remark of Walter Pater’s (“Miscellaneous Studies,” p. 200).

instance, he draws out the thought of "A Particular Providence as revealed in the Gospel."

The years from 1833 to 1840 were the fat years of success; the lean years had yet to run. The Heads of Houses, good, easy men, at last took alarm. The movement threatened at once their peace, their comfort, and their traditions. The Bishops followed in their wake. "*Les natures profondément bonnes,*" says Renan, "*sont toujours indécises.*"¹ For this, or other reasons, the Anglican Episcopate suffers from constitutional debility. Its representatives have too often been found wanting in serious crises. They find "the pain of new ideas" more than ordinarily painful; first bury their hands in the sand; then, discovering that the foe has only advanced, take refuge in ignorant violence. As it was in the days of the Pilgrim Fathers and Wesley and Darwin, as it is perhaps at the present moment, so in Newman's time the real issue evaded the episcopal vision. One excellent prelate, it is said, was at a loss to determine if he held Newman's doctrine as to the origin of his order or no.² Men get frightened at what they cannot understand or account for. As the Movement grew in breadth and intensity, condemnations, thick as hail, began to rain upon the Tractarians. The Heads of Houses publicly adjudged Tract 90, in

¹ Renan, "St Paul," p. 84.

² Newman, "Apologia," p. 44; Church, "Oxford Movement," p. 106.

which Newman had claimed a Catholic interpretation for the XXXIX. Articles (by reading them in the light of the works of the high church divines of the seventeenth century, and thus craftily giving them "the literal and grammatical sense," which their Calvinist authors had, all unwittingly, desiderated for them)¹ to be a treacherous attempt to import Roman Catholic error into the Church of England. Isaac Williams, a Tractarian, gentle and modest as Keble, was thrown out in the contest for the Professorship of Poetry on account of his religious opinions. Macmullen for the same reason was, somewhat ungenerously, refused his B.D. degree by Dr Hampden, and had to sue for it in the Vice-Chancellor's court. Even Pusey did not escape, and was condemned unheard for preaching high doctrine about the sacrament. The Bishop of Chester, Sumner, one day to be Archbishop of Canterbury, was not to be outdone by the Oxford authorities, and made up in violence what he lacked in power. The Movement, he declared, in his Charge, was the work of the devil.² This statement took the wind out of every one else's sails, but his brother bishops said what they could.

Words, perhaps, were not of great consequence, but a proposal set on foot by Bunsen, the Prussian

¹ "Via Media," ii. p. 344.

² Church, "Oxford Movement," p. 219.

Minister—a sort of Protestant De Maistre—that the English Church should coalesce with the Lutheran Church of Prussia in the appointment of a bishop of Jerusalem, cut at the very heart of the theory which the Oxford Movement was designed to propagate. The scheme was favourably entertained by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London (Howley and Blomfield), and for a moment seemed as if it might come to fruition; though in the end it perished untimely, not, however, before it had carried Newman a long stride further on the road to Rome.¹

If the old men were against him young Oxford was well at his back. His supporters hurried to the front, and in a little time were hurrying their leader after them. Oakeley, Ward, Faber, and Dalgairns were the more distinguished; and of these Ward, by reason of his kindliness, brilliant talk, and clever dialectic, was the most noticed. He was no doubt as sincere as it was in his nature to be, but he was a humorist and, like all humorists, knew that a great deal of fun was to be got out of games with logic. Such men doubtless have their place in the economy of human affairs, but it is not in the vanguard of spiritual thought. Ward made fun with logic, and logic made fun of him. In the end his mental gymnastics took

¹ "Apologia," p. 146.

him clean over the boundary, although he continued to assure the spectators that he was still on the same side of the fence. His "Ideal of a Christian Church" was in fact the apotheosis of the Church of Rome. It was determined to deprive him of his degree for writing it. He made an excellent speech before convocation, defended his loyalty to the Church of England, and assured his hearers that he held "the whole cycle of Roman doctrine."¹ Condemnation was of course pronounced, but consolation followed in its wake, and the staunch advocate of clerical celibacy became, before the week was out, the recipient of congratulations on his engagement to be married.

All this was vastly entertaining; but for one man it greatly increased a cruel embarrassment. An exchange of one communion for another might be accomplished by Ward without a day's inconvenience. To Newman it meant no less than a surrender of all the beliefs and hopes, charities and friendships, consecrated by long-sustained endeavour. It was the peculiar secret of his influence that all his thoughts were bought with a price, that they had been grafted into his life before he tried to pluck their fruit. Few men care for the pain and labour of this; fewer can effect it even at that cost. Yet thoughts,

¹ Wilfrid Ward, "W. G. Ward and the Oxford Movement," pp. 340-341.

elsewise produced, have little flavour in them. Newman knew, as most great men have known, that the highest sort of friendship is built upon a common purpose, social or spiritual. When Fox cried out to Burke, who was fiercely denouncing the French Revolution and its English supporters across the floor of the House, that he hoped there was no loss of friends, Burke answered, "Yes, yes! there is a loss of friends. I know the price of my conduct. I have done my duty at the price of my friend. Our friendship is at an end." These no doubt were extreme measures, not to be admired or adopted, but the sentiment rings true, and only so long as men are toying with religion or politics will they have their real friends in the opposite camp. The moment Church or State is seriously imperilled, all private feelings must be ruthlessly cauterised.

What Newman suffered, as his disciples began to secede and his own doubts to thicken and encompass him, may be read in the last five "Sermons on Subjects of the Day," the last sermons he preached at St Mary's. Now he sees himself as Balaam,¹ casting the blame of his own blindness on another; now as Elijah fulfilling his mission in a world where the heaven above is dark and the stars hidden;² now as the forlorn Israelite, singing the Lord's song in a

¹ "Sermons on Subjects of the Day," pp. 337, 357.

² *Ibid.*, p. 369.

strange land ;¹ at last as Jacob, 'parting with all that his heart loved,' and setting out upon a dreary way over Jordan into a strange country.²

These were perhaps the most wonderful sermons he ever preached, for the tension was very great, and the soul, poised between hope and fear, could no longer maintain its reserve, but breathed out again and again its passionate secrets.

"Lusisti satis, edisti satis, atque bibisti
Tempus abire tibi est ; ne potum largius æquo
Rideat et pulset lasciva decentius ætas,"

he wrote of himself to his sister on 6th February 1842, quoting in his distress a poet little congenial to his nature.³

A day or so later he had left Oxford for Littlemore, an outlying, much neglected district of his parish ; this little change of abode marking a long stage in the progress of his opinions. Already, since the end of 1841, he had been, as he afterwards affirmed,⁴ on his death-bed in respect of his Anglican opinions. It was at Littlemore that Ward's ecclesiastical conundrums became so insistent.⁵ Newman, even in retirement, was made aware, like many another party leader, that his thoughts were not his own, that

¹ "Sermons on Subjects of the Day," p. 384.

² *Ibid.*, p. 399.

³ "Letters and Correspondence of J. H. Newman," ii. p. 386.

⁴ "Apologia," p. 147.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

a whole party hung upon his words, or, as he probably felt, that a number of souls lay in his hand. What Newman let fall at Littlemore, Ward reported in Oxford. It is significant, as a French critic observes, that the "Apologia" seems to avoid the mention of Ward's name.¹

Archbishop Benson said that Oxford men never seemed to realise what a weak man Newman was.² Very possibly not! since few men were stronger. Benson, who never had a religious doubt himself,³ was quite unfitted to understand the awful pain which a mind intensely acute, subtle, and imaginative, must from time to time experience as it probes the very foundations of the mysterious world in which it finds itself, when the firm ground begins to rock under the feet, and the mind grows dizzy with the knowledge of its own insufficiency, and the temptation is to have done and let oneself go and end the misery without further thought or struggle. The crisis was never for Newman, as it was for Ward, the resolution of a nice problem in dialectic. It reached to the very recesses of his heart, so that afterwards he felt that there was no logical halting-place between Atheism and Catholicism⁴—that the Roman Question was but one aspect

¹ Bremond ("Mystery of Newman," p. 28) says there is no mention of Ward in the "Apologia." This is not so. He is mentioned on p. 171.

² A. C. Benson, "Life of E. W. Benson," ii. p. 553.

³ *Ibid.*, i. p. 103.

⁴ "Apologia," p. 198.

of the enigma of our present being and its proper attitude toward God. If there were a Creator, if there had been a Revelation, if a Society of divine institution had been set in the world for the enlightenment of poor humanity, could it be that a Church, whose laity claimed independence of thought as their chiefest privilege, whose clergy were jolly sportsmen in well-appointed parsonages, whose bishops repudiated the idea of an apostolic commission, was anything but a rotten branch, a slip of wild olive, unfit to be grafted in the parent tree? In what manner did she differ from the semi-Arians of the fourth century,¹ who would have none of the Nicean symbol because it was a development of the primitive apostolic faith, or the Monophysites who had refused the Tome of St Leo in the controversy about the continuance of the Two Natures in Christ after the Ascension?² Augustine had said: "Securus judicat orbis terrarum," and lapse of time had in effect discovered the judgment of the Church against Arius, and Donatus, and Eutyches³ to be just, and the Bishop of Rome in each case⁴ had focussed the dawning wisdom of the Church.

These were the thoughts that burnt within. And without there was a situation not unlike that which George Eliot, with her wonderful eye

¹ "Apologia," p. 139.

² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ "Development of Church Doctrine," pp. 279, 283, 309.

for the psychology of a crisis has imagined for Savonarola, as he stood in the wooden pulpit in the Piazza of San Marco and asked a sign to reassure the expectant, anxious people beneath: "His faith wavered but not his speech: it is the lot of every man who has to speak for the satisfaction of the crowd that he must often speak in virtue of yesterday's faith, hoping it will come back to-morrow." Yet for all this the mortal sickness of Newman's "Anglicanism" was prolonged over four years. Weaker men would have hastened the inevitable conclusion by a kind of suicide, but he would take no opiate, and when the end came at last it was by natural means.

On the 9th October 1845, on a wild and tempestuous day, when the heavens seemed broken with weeping,¹ having finished all that he ever wrote of his "Doctrine of Development," he was received by Father Dominic² into that which he ever afterwards held to be the only Catholic Church of Christ. Five months later he left Oxford. His departure has always been felt to have possessed that sort of dramatic propriety, which requires some definitive outward catastrophe to determine, and as it were fix irrevocably in the mind of the spectator the close of a period of intense moral difficulty. He

¹ See Meynell, "Newman," pp. 61, 62.

² The curious history of Father Dominic will be found in Purcell's "Life of Manning," i. p. 369.

seems to have been conscious of this himself, and did not return to the gracious city of the mystic spires until the old actors were mostly gone, and the old controversies half-buried by the new school of latitudinarian thinkers.

When the play is played out we begin to look for the superhuman forces—Eternal Verities, Spirits of the Age, Powers angelic or demoniacal—that have moulded the conduct of the players. Newman said, and no doubt quite truly, that the semi-Arian, and Donatist, and Monophysite schisms had risen before him, once and again,¹ like ill-laid ghosts, to warn him away from the “Via Media” of the Anglican Church. But, if we care to search for them, we can see that the phantoms had been hovering about his path earlier than he knew, and that converging lines of thought had almost from the first been driving him along the road to Rome.

It is the particular distinction of the Oxford Movement among efforts after a nobler life that it was rooted in history as no other movement has ever been. In ecclesiastical historians England was, as Newman saw, singularly deficient. Gibbon was the only man worthy of the name,² and he had been an infidel. Newman took up the study just where the author of the “Decline and Fall” had laid it down. That wonderful book had always possessed a

¹ “Apologia,” pp. 118, 139.

² “Development of Christian Doctrine,” p. 8.

fascination for him¹—it is said that he read it through once every year for style alone—but it was the fascination of terror or at least of antagonism. In Gibbon and Gibbon's pupil, Milman, he recognised the real foes of the cause of which he was the champion;² nor can there be much doubt that his judgment was right. Systems of philosophy are too speculative permanently to endanger the doctrines of religion. No one, perhaps, quite believes in them, not even their inventors. But from the facts of history it is hard to get away, and, for the plain man at least, they are, as Napoleon claimed, 'the only true philosophy.' Newman saw, as Gibbon had seen before him, that the one matter which the ecclesiastical historian can by no means afford to ignore is the miraculous narratives. They run from end to end of Church history as from end to end of Judaism. You may be sceptical like Gibbon or believing like Newman, but you cannot avoid them. Newman himself had never doubted that miracles were necessary to a revelation. He saw, plainly enough,³ what Harnack and his latter-day adherents can never be brought to see—that a non-miraculous revela-

¹ *Cp.* "Letters and Correspondence I., Autobiographical Memoir," p. 41: "When I reflect, etc."

² *See* "Ess. Crit. and Hist.," ii. pp. 186-248. There is, of course, no intention on the part of the present writer to suggest that Milman was himself a sceptic or intended to promote scepticism. But he used the historical method of Gibbon in dealing with the Christian Church, and thus, as Newman thought, insensibly sacrificed the kernel of ecclesiastical history for the husk.

³ "Essay on Miracles," p. 12.

tion is utterly unconvincing. The point was best put by J. B. Mozley:—

“Would not a perfectly sinless character be proof of a revelation? Undoubtedly, that would be as great a miracle as any that could be conceived; but where is the proof of perfect sinlessness? No outward life and conduct, however just, benevolent and irreproachable, could prove this, because goodness depends upon the inward motive, and the perfection of the inward motive is not proved by the outward act.”¹

The necessity of the gospel miracles being for this reason conceded, it became *ipso facto* a question by what right the miracles of the Church were disbelieved. The Protestant view, which, as Gibbon had discovered, ran counter to history, draws a convenient line between the miracles of Scripture, which are true as resting upon unimpeachable testimony, and the miracles of the Church which are popish fables, the exuberant fancies of a disordered imagination. For a time Newman was content with some such distinction as this. Further study convinced him that history is no friend to Protestantism. The difficulty is simply that no one has been able to fix the moment of time, nor even the century, in which the Church lost her miraculous powers; that the theologians of the Middle Age, although they suppose the miracles of their own time not so great as those that had gone before, yet speak of them as common occurrences in

¹ Mozley, “Bampton Lectures,” i. p. 11.

the life of the Church. The classical passage is in the twenty-second book of the "Civitas Dei." Augustine gives a full and particular account of several miracles, which he could either personally attest or whose patients he had himself interrogated. He adds that volumes would be required to record the miracles which had been wrought in Hippo and Calama by the relics of St Stephen. The Synoptics are not closer to the wonders they relate than this; hence the great importance of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. Nor does Augustine stand alone. His testimony is echoed by a very cloud of witness, reaching into our own time. *Mutatis mutandis*, as much can be said for the marvels of Loretto and Lourdes as for those of the third and fourth centuries. Such evidence as is collected, for instance, in M. Bertrin's "Histoire Critique des Evénements de Lourdes" is superior—if the rules of evidence are put in force—to that which exists for the miracles of the New Testament, and as certainly precludes any natural explanations. If you begin, in fact, where are you to stop? If you accept the evidence of the first century, why do you refuse the evidence of the tenth or the twentieth?

Gibbon had seen all this, and it had made him a sceptic. Newman saw it, and it made him a catholic. There is indeed no middle way. The evidence for particular miracles may be strong or weak: Newman held in fact that

the miracles of the New Testament were better proven than those of ecclesiastical history.¹ There may be a difference of character ; Scripture miracles mostly possessing a beauty and dignity denied to the rest.² But, when all varieties have been noticed, they are essentially of the same blood, related, as Newman says, in one of those beautiful passages of simple imagery in which he excels, like smiling valleys and 'luxuriant wildernesses' or tame and savage animals.³ The distinctions are superficial ; the similarities fundamental. More, if you meet Hume's argument against miracles, as Newman virtually did,⁴ by saying that it is not a question between the probability of an alteration in the course of Nature and the false witness of twelve men, but between the former and the witness of twelve particular chosen men, you make character, as it ought to be, the ultimate test of truth. But all the men of character in the Middle Age believed in miracles. You could hardly, for example, wish a better witness than Augustine—a trained lawyer, a master in thought and knowledge, a man of the highest excellence. To expect that good people should be sometimes mistaken in particular cases is not unreasonable in a world which is at a loss to give an adequate

¹ "Essay on Miracles," p. 334.

² *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁴ "Oxf. Univ. Sermon," pp. 195, 196. Cf. Froude, "The Oxford Counter-Reformation."

metaphysical explanation of Error. To suppose that good people have been always and everywhere utterly deceived in the whole matter of divine interventions is impossible for a Christian—impossible, perhaps, for any one who does not wish to end in unbounded scepticism and despair.

Newman's rare logic was bearing him far out of the old paths. There can hardly have been an English Churchman of that time who believed that the Church anywhere possessed or might possess miraculous powers. Jolly old clergymen, somehow exalted to comfortable pre-eminence, must have rubbed their eyes if they had the curiosity to follow the track of Newman's thought. Other kindred considerations led him the same way, for he was always learning. Hawkins, Provost of Oriel, early showed him that it was the Church that taught doctrine, not the Bible, which did no more than prove the truth of it.¹ This theory, which fell in so well with the conception of the Church as a living body possessed of miraculous powers, grew into a volume called "The Prophetical Office of the Church," which was designed to put forward the Anglican claim in systematic shape. The author begins by securing a position which, although Protestants sometimes ignore it, they have never been able to turn. The argument runs in this wise. The Church of England appeals to Antiquity as the

¹ "Apologia," p. 9.

test of true doctrine, inasmuch as she professes her belief in an Apostolic Church. In the Church of the Apostles there was no New Testament. What was passed from man to man was a tradition. When the New Testament was at last formed it appeared as the guarantee of the existing tradition. Yet it is evident that it was the tradition that had first guaranteed the veracity and authenticity of the books. The test of true doctrine, therefore, is held to have been stated by Vincent of Lerins in his *Commonitorium*. What had always, everywhere, and by all been believed, that was the Catholic faith. Newman's mind was far too precise to find this test more than a rough one. It may well be doubted if it is so much. The Creed of Chalcedon (the "Nicene" Creed) would have astonished by its detail the primitive Christians, who were content to confess that "Jesus is the Lord." The Double Procession, rejected by the Orthodox Church, is an article of faith in the West. Patristic opinion, again, is difficult to ascertain, nor always self-consistent when ascertained. So that the rule appears to possess a minimum of practical value.

All this Newman came to see later on. But, indeed, throughout the book he is at his weakest. He does his work after the manner of Butler,¹ but by temper of mind he is no disciple of Butler at all. He cannot give to his arguments

¹ "Via Media," i. p. 56.

the logical cogency which the form of them so much desiderates. The Romans, he said, made the mistake of supposing the Church to be infallible,¹ and yet he himself believed her indefectible.² She erred in details he thought—never in fundamentals. How the one are distinguished from the other does not appear. To say that the essentials of Christian doctrine—the nature of the Person of Christ—were determined before the breach between East and West,³ is to ignore the fact that the proper relation of man to his Maker, at least as important for poor humanity as the other, was the great problem which the Church was called upon to resolve in the Middle Ages, just as now in modern civilisation she is faced with the question of his proper relation to the world. Again, on the doctrine of Papal Infallibility he delivers a violent assault, not apparently perceiving that every single argument which lies against the Pope lies with equal or greater force against the claim of the Councils to be regarded as divine oracles. Of the central difficulty of the Anglican position he is indeed awkwardly aware. He perceives with discomfort that the Anglican works upon one theory, until some moment not exactly defined between 600 and 800, and then adopts another: that for the first eight centuries (the period of the Undivided Church as it is called, though indeed it had

¹ "Via Media," i. pp. 85, 86.

² *Ibid.*, Lect. viii

³ Newman says this somewhere, but I have been unable to recover the reference.

been sufficiently divided by the Nestorian and Eutychian schisms) the English Church supposes a close divine guidance, while for the next twelve the divine guidance has been so far relaxed that a perfect expression of Catholicity is only rediscovered by human reason at the Reformation in a small island of the west of Europe.

In what, then, does a truly Catholic attitude seem to him consist?

“According to English principles the religious faith has all it needs . . . in knowing that God is our Creator and Preserver, and that He may, if it so happen, have spoken. This, indeed, is its trial and its praise, so to hang upon the thought of Him, and desire Him as not to wait until it knows for certain from infallible informants whether or no he has spoken, but to act in the way which seems on the whole most likely to please Him. If we are asked how Faith differs from Opinion, we reply, in its considering His being, governance, and will, as a matter of personal interest to us, not in the degree of light and darkness under which it perceives the truth concerning them.”¹

Faith is thus linked to opinion, though not identical with it, and opinion is private judgment. At one end of the scale is the note of obedience, at the other of independence. The English Church holds both in harmony or, according to Newman's own metaphor, follows the “Via Media.” But obedience is nobler than independence, just as credulity is nobler than scepticism. If the

¹ “Via Media,” i. p. 86.

two principles seem to conflict, a man's duty is to submit to Church authority, and wait for light ;¹ yet this only in so far as he does not lose sight of Antiquity, to which his first obedience is due.

“The Roman Catholic would simplify matters by removing Reason, Scripture, and Antiquity, and depending mainly on Church authority ; the Calvinist relies on Reason, Scripture, and Criticism, to the disparagement of the Moral Sense, the Church, Tradition, and Antiquity ; the Latitudinarian relies on Reason, with Scripture in subordination, the Mystic on the imagination and the affections, or what is commonly called the heart ; the Politician takes the National Faith as sufficient, and cares for little else ; the man of the world acts by common sense, which is the oracle of the indifferent ; the popular Religionist considers the authorised version of Scripture to be all in all. But the true Catholic Christian is he who takes what God has given him, be it greater or less, does not despise the lesser, because he has received the greater, yet puts it not before the greater, but uses all duly and to God's glory.”²

This is beautifully said. So, again, the poet comes to the aid of the logician, when Newman has to explain why the power of spiritual vision, once confided to Christ's society, and so necessary, one would suppose, to her progress, has been clouded, if not altogether lost. “Any one,” he said, “who maintains that the Church is all that Christ intended her to be has the analogy of

¹ “Via Media,” i. p. 135.

² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

Judaism full against him.¹ . . . A continual Infallibility, were it ever intended, might require the presence of a superhuman charity and peace."² Yet he apparently believed that for seven centuries in the midst of howling anathemas this Infallibility had been deserved or at least granted. To fix the exact date, he adds, when the Church fell from her first holiness, is a matter, not theology, but of history. If the theological of admission involved be granted, Roman Catholics have nothing to complain of when Anglicans leave the date vague, placing it with Ken in 800, or with Bramhall in 600.

Out of a book, which is not easy to analyse, two seemingly contradictory conclusions emerge. On one side it has been shown that doctrinal faith rests historically upon tradition, not upon the Bible. On the other tradition itself has been shown to be untrustworthy. How then are we to decide what is of faith? This brings us to the crux of the Anglican argument, and Newman was never more skilful than when he dealt with it. Tradition, he says in effect, shall be confronted with itself, brought before its own tribunal, and the verdict will be in favour of the English Church.

"We do not discard the tradition of the Fathers; we accept it—we accept it entirely; we accept its witness concerning itself and against itself; it witnesses to its own inferiority to

¹ "Via Media," i. p. 198.

² *Ibid.*, p. 202.

Scripture, it witnesses, not only that Scripture is the record, but that it is the sole record of saving truth."¹

The formation of a Canon had in fact cut asunder the Roman argument by cutting asunder tradition. The fathers had themselves recognised two sorts of tradition, authoritative and questionable. The former could claim scriptural authority, the latter was just pious opinion, and in the sphere of private judgment. The one was summarised in creeds, which are an "episcopal tradition"; the other was a vast but vague and incoherent mass of truths, legends, fancies, customs, hopes, and prejudices,² of only secondary interest and importance. To maintain this distinction, much obliterated by mediæval piety and superstition, was the work of the Protestant Reformation, and the Bible was the sword which effected the cleavage.

It is perhaps worth while to pause here a moment before we pass on. Newman's argument is strong, so long and only so long, as the Bible is regarded with Bishop Stubbs³ as a book unlike other books; different in its nature and origin. The *Lux Mundi* school, and the critics after them, have very much weakened this view of it, and in so doing have, unintentionally, weakened the Anglican claim. Roman Catholics

¹ "Via Media," i. p. 286.

² *Ibid.*, p. 250.

³ Stubbs, "Visitation Charges," pp. 140, 141.

of the advanced type have not been slow to see this.¹ If it were not for the Tridentine decision² on the inspiration of the sacred text, the Vatican could afford to recognise the Higher Criticism far more conveniently than any Protestant Church. But ecclesiastical politics are of all party politics the most hateful, never tolerable indeed at all unless one knows, as Newman did, how to find the favoured spot in the high hills,³ where things cease to rush and flow, and a brightness settles over the battlefield, and time catches the look of eternity.

We have to finish our analysis of the "Via Media." Newman uses, once again, the analogy of the Jewish Church to defend the Church of England against the charge of being no better than a parliamentary creation. The Establishment was no worse a thing, he thought, than the consecration of Saul to rule over the theocratic state of the Hebrews.

To his whole argument he added a curious rider. The idea of the "Via Media" had, he declared, never yet been reduced to system,⁴ nor visibly realised.⁵ It existed only on paper,⁶ in

¹ Briggs and Von Hügel, "The Papal Commission," p. 48. (The reference might suggest that Dr Briggs is a Roman Catholic. This, of course, is not so.)

² For a discussion of what is involved in this decision, see Manning, "Essays in Religion and Literature," series ii. pp. 357, 358.

³ Lucretius, *De Rerum*, ii. l. 331.

⁴ "Via Media," i. p. 23.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

the writings of the seventeenth century divines — Bull and Hammond and Andrewes — with Wilson and Butler to support them in the eighteenth.¹ It had yet to be forged into shape,² and for this a revival of the power of excommunication was absolutely necessary.³ Any attempt to do so, however, must be made subject to three conditions: loyalty to the Prayer-Book, submission to the Thirty - Nine Articles, and deference to the Episcopate.⁴ In the event the rider upset the main proposition. The Prayer-Book failed to satisfy the advance-guard of the Tractarians; Tract 90, setting a Catholic interpretation upon the articles was pronounced treacherous; and the Bishops, as we have seen, renounced their birthright.

The "Via Media" was published in 1837. By 1841 it appeared unworkable, and Newman was fixing his eyes with the earnestness of a dying man upon Rome, which he had formerly supposed to be the abode of anti-Christ. Once again his thoughts shaped themselves into an essay, half history, half theology, upon the Church. At least his conception of it as a society external to himself, and to whose doctrines his allegiance was imperatively due, had never wavered.⁵ If God had revealed Himself in human shape, the Heavens had never wholly closed again, nor the

¹ "Via Media," i. p. 23.

² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁵ "Apologia," pp. 48, 49.

means of grace been left to human invention. "Who is she," he had asked, "that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."¹ That was the quest to which he had devoted the best years of his life, and in the essay on the "Development of Doctrine" he gave to the world the results of his search.

That famous book, the first word, it seems, of spurious,² the last word, perhaps, of genuine Roman Catholic theology, is the narrative of Newman's mental progress during the dark years at Littlemore. Fancy, eager to have all things nice, told how, as he wrote it standing at his desk, his body wasted to a shadow, till at last when doubt was gone and Rome assured, he appeared transparent,³ the very kinsman of "the humble monk and holy nun," whom, four years before, he had held up at St Mary's as the true and only remaining representatives of Apostolic Christianity.⁴ If his body suffered, his intellect was never clearer, more persuasive, more unrelenting. Once more he laid the foundation of his argument in history. It is a "safe truth" that "the Christianity of history is not Protestantism."⁵ Once more he appealed to Gibbon,

¹ Motto for the 1st edition of the "Church of the Fathers."

² See Loisy, "L'Évangile et l'Église," p. 205 ; Tyrrell's Introduction to Bremond's "Mystery of Newman," pp. xiv., xv.

³ Hutton, "Cardinal Newman."

⁴ "Sermons on Subjects of the Day," xix.

⁵ "Development of Christian Doctrine," p. 7.

“perhaps the only English writer who has any claim to be considered an ecclesiastical historian.”¹ Once more he took up the *quod semper* rule of faith, this time to rend it. Always, everywhere, there had been as great, or a greater, consensus of patristic opinion in favour of the Papacy as in favour of the Real Presence² or the Trinity.³ If the evidence was sufficient to assure the antiquity of these latter it was also sufficient to assure that of the former. That a certain expansion or development of doctrine had taken place in the Catholic Church was more than an Anglican could afford to deny without stultifying his own argument. The monarchical episcopate, as it appeared in the Ignatian epistles, was a decided advance upon the loose bishoprics of the first times. In the Apostolic Age the presence of the twelve had retarded the growth of the episcopal order, as well as that of the Papacy.⁴ Two special circumstances besides had contributed to check the just claims of the Roman See. One was the love which the early Christians bore towards each other, for “love dispenses with laws,”⁵ and the other was the repressive policy of the Empire.⁶ When the Apostles were long gone, and the first love of the Christians had waxed cold and persecution had ceased, the Bishop of Rome grew to his proper stature. So

¹ “Development of Christian Doctrine,” p. 25.

² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

also and contemporaneously did the doctrine of the Godhead of the Son, for "that the language of the anti-Nicene Fathers, on the subject of our Lord's Divinity, may be far more easily accommodated to the Arian hypothesis than can the language of the post-Nicene, is agreed on all hands."¹

The Papacy was the complement of the Councils; "first, local disturbances gave exercise to Bishops, and next, œcumenical disturbances gave exercise to Popes."² Monarchical power was essential to the consolidation of Christendom.³ To deny it was to blot out the Church for the twelve centuries which lay between the rise of the Papacy and the dawn of the Reformation.⁴

To the present writer the main line of Newman's argument appears perfectly sound. The promise to St Peter is as good scriptural evidence as exists for more than one now universally accepted, but once fiercely contested, doctrine, and twelve centuries of ratification in the West culminating (thanks to friendly circumstances) in a formal recognition by the East lie to the credit of the Roman Primacy, and are not lightly to be explained away. If ever the English Church succeeds in convincing the world of the soundness of its position, it will be by confession and avoidance, by admitting on the one hand

¹ "Development of Christian Doctrine," p. 135.

² *Ibid.*, p. 151.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Newman's account of the rise of the Papacy, and denying on the other that the fusion of Church and State under Constantine was a true development. The Roman Papacy would then appear like a Roman dictatorship; a notable expedient to provide against a temporary evil.

Newman did not leave the matter here, but put his interpretation of the facts to a very singular test. In the manner of a Darwinian biologist he set the living Roman Church of the nineteenth century beside the Church of the Fathers, so as to see whether their likenesses proved them essentially the same, and if their distinctions could be attributed to a long evolution. A genuine development would, he maintained, be shown in the following points: (*a*) by a preservation of the original type; (*b*) by a continuity of principles; (*c*) by a power of assimilating the food required for nourishment; (*d*) by a logical, if unconscious, sequence of ideas directed by a moral energy; (*e*) by anticipations of future developments, illustrated in such points as the primitive devotion to the relics of saints and martyrs, a life of virginity, the cult of saints and angels; (*f*) by a conservative action of the subject on its past, as when in the days of her temporal greatness the rulers of the Church were monks for remembrance of the poverty and humiliation of the first times; (*g*) by an historic continuity.

The conclusion arrived at, as the reader is aware, was in favour of the identity of the Primitive and Roman Churches. Leslie Stephen remarked in effect that it was conclusive against Protestants of all sorts, but not conclusive in favour of Catholicism. Protestant creeds, as he pointed out, were essentially eclectic, and as such analogous to artificial, not to natural, products.¹ They were grafted, not grown. On the other hand, how was it fair to say that Catholicism was true for more than a time? If the fact that the more progressive races of mankind once accepted it is a proof of its spiritual vitality, by virtue of the "*securus judicat orbis terrarum*" maxim, then the fact that they have now rejected it is a proof of its spiritual decay. Newman could afford to use the theory of evolution, but not the theory of natural selection. The one would dethrone the Protestant creeds as unnatural freaks, but the other would dethrone Catholicism as decadent species. Stephen's bitter logic, however, appears to have been in one point deficient. There is no kind of reason for supposing that what is fittest to survive is therefore absolutely the best. Catholicism is evidently unsuited for a life of material comfort, such as the modern world supplies. It came to its strength in fact in a time of great spiritual necessity. It will evidently appear to decay at a moment of great

¹ Stephen, "An Agnostic's Apology," p. 189.

temporal prosperity. But it is a long leap in logic, as well as a wild sally in optimism, to assume that change is always improvement; that because a body of belief, positive or negative, is well fitted to its conditions, the conditions themselves are therefore well calculated to produce the noblest beliefs.

J. B. Mozley made another criticism. The tests which Newman had applied to show the orthodoxy of the Roman Church would equally establish, he said, that of the Greek.¹ This is hardly the case. After the first, the Greek Church has shown no power of assimilation. Wrapped in idle abstraction she has allowed the current of the world's thought to pass by unheeded. Anyway, whether or not Newman established the identity he was seeking, there can be no doubt that he made a serious contribution to the philosophy of history. If history is to be more than a kaleidoscopic picture of the past, the historian must determine what developments are true and what false to national or spiritual genius, and Newman's tests of a true development (except the last which is superfluous) are perhaps as good as can be found. Historians, have, it is true, been of set purpose slow to make use of this method, yet nearly all the practical value of their art springs from something of the sort.

Behind the historical problem with which

¹ Mozley, "Theory of Development," p. 3.

Newman had dealt, there lay, as he was aware, a theological one, to which, however, history also has something to say.

"The one essential question," he says, "is whether the recognised organ of teaching, the Church herself, acting through Pope or Council as the oracle of heaven, has ever contradicted her own enunciations. If so, the hypothesis which I am advocating is at once shattered, but, till I have positive and distinct evidence of the fact, I am slow to give credence to the existence of so great an improbability."¹

Whether, and if so at what time or in what place, the Church was the oracle of heaven is, of course, a matter of theology. Two Councils² certainly, which to the untutored eye would seem to have had a nearly equal claim in point of numbers and distinction with those acknowledged to be œcumenical, made statements which were afterwards, if they had not been before, publicly repudiated. Three Popes — Liberius, Vigilius, and Honorius—fell into something painfully like heresy, and as Newman himself points out, "have left to posterity the burden of their defence."³ The strength of a theory, like the strength of a chain, is its weakest link. Those who believe that divine oracles, like human ones, speak only in response to a long and patient

¹ "Development of Doctrine," p. 121.

² "Ariminum" (359); "Ephesus" (449).

³ "Development of Doctrine," p. 139.

pursuit of truth, that right opinions do in the long issue of events make for life, and wrong ones produce stagnation and decay, may find their faith a far easier one to defend than the indefectibility of Popes and Councils, unless, indeed, they adopt the naïve device of an Anglican bishop and historian, and argue that "it may be said that general councils do not err, for when they err they are not recognised as general by the true mind of the Church."¹ But they may also find that they have been fighting for a shadow, for an ecclesiastical infallibility that operates only by lapse of time is little better than a pretentious name for the vitality of an idea, and a strange display of that infallibility of the Church, which is surely "a necessary consequence of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and of his perpetual office beginning from the Day of Pentecost."²

Newman passed into the Church of Rome, having been the first for three hundred years to awaken a serious doubt in the mind of his countrymen as to the wisdom and excellence of the Reformation. But, as he had been aware throughout,³ a deeper question than any doctrinal

¹ Collins, "Authority of General Councils" (S.P.C.K.), p. 186.

² This consideration greatly influenced Manning at the time of his secession from the English Church. See Purcell's "Life of Manning," i. p. 471: "Is not the Infallibility of the Church a necessary consequence of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and of his perpetual office beginning from the Day of Pentecost? This seems to me to be revealed in Scripture."

³ "Oxf. Univ. Sermon," p. 69.

one had been in issue, all unperceived by the divines, in the struggles of the sixteenth century—the question of the attitude which a man should adopt towards religion and religious truth. Was he blindly and without enquiry to accept the assurances of priests, something in the same way as we accept the dicta of men of science at the present day, or was he to trust his own intellect, when the worst has been said of it, a God-given thing? Was the truth of dogma absolutely final, as true for the next world as for the one that now is; or was it just shadowy appearance, the best that could be hoped for in a universe abounding in cheats and deceptions? Was it possible to have hold of certitude, or must we be content, as Butler had advised, to take probability as our guide and make the most of it? These under-currents of the Reformation had been slowly rising to the surface through the mud and débris of the controversy, and Newman in attempting to turn the stream was well aware that, unless he could found his dam in the bed of the river, it must quickly be swept away.

The “Grammar of Assent” is a philosophy of Catholicism, and Newman was probably right in thinking that some such system as his is at the root of any religious belief whatever.¹ In those early Sermons regarding the proper relation of Reason and Faith, preached before

¹ “Grammar of Assent,” note ii.

the University of Oxford, he had indeed foreshadowed its conclusions. A curious inquirer might, perhaps, trace the source of his thought further still, to his close yet incongruous intercourse with Whately, the author of those delightful "Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Bonaparte," which must have made every one feel how curiously thin is the line between the findings of reason and absolute scepticism. Newman at least had as much desire to possess certitude as he had reason to distrust the rational process. In a world of mysteries, which thinking does little or nothing to fathom, and where guides are so necessary that we cannot move a step without them, we are compelled to trust our intuitions. This is true as well for the man of science as for the man of God. Memory is an intuitive power, the fidelity of which is not to be established by any process of argumentation. If we trust it we commit an act of faith, for it may be cheating us all the while. And yet, without trusting it, neither science, nor philosophy, nor anything else can advance a single step.¹

All our knowledge was acquired, he argued, subject to this condition, and that knowledge, such as it was, was drawn from two sources—the images that we perceived for ourselves, and to which, therefore, we gave a real assent and

¹ "Grammar of Assent," p. 23; "Oxf. Univ. Serm.," p. 213. This point is pressed home in W. G. Ward's "Philosophy of Theism," Essay I.

the abstractions that we accepted from others, and which, therefore, were no more to us than notions. Each kind of knowledge had its advantages.

"To apprehend notionally was to have breadth of mind, but to be shallow, to apprehend really was to be deep, but to be narrow-minded. The latter was the conservative principle of knowledge, and the former the principle of its advancement."¹

Yet of the two it was plain which was to be preferred. That of which we could speak from personal experience, to which our assent was a real one, was that alone which we were competent to appreciate at its proper value. This was the reason that boys who showed little ability in school often showed most in the world. A man who had no mind for theory constantly proved a master in war or trade or engineering, even in literature or speculation, because he had the power of real apprehension,² a genius, as we say, for this or that particular study, upon which his mind was concentrated. The highest matters—doctrine, dogma—were equally susceptible with the lowest of being treated as notions or as objects. The first way was that of theology, the second was that of religion.³

Newman was strangely English, or, as his

¹ "Grammar of Assent," p. 34.

² *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

opponents thought, strangely clever. By a few strokes of the pen he had rid himself of the charge of abstract speculation in sacred things, and was building up his argument on the only philosophy that Englishmen will listen to — a philosophy of experience. To a man of his temper the rest was easy. In a passage, half poetry, all truth, he discovers the meaning of conscience. He is in no fear of its being said that conscience is emotional; it was exactly because it was always emotional that it was so significant.

“Inanimate things cannot stir our affections; these are correlative with persons. If, as is the case, we feel responsibility, are ashamed, are frightened, at transgressing the voice of conscience, this implies that there is One to Whom we are responsible, before Whom we are ashamed, Whose claims upon us we fear. If, on doing wrong, we feel the same tearful, broken-hearted sorrow which overwhelms us on hurting a mother; if, on doing right, we enjoy the same sunny serenity of mind, the same soothing satisfactory delight which follows on our receiving praise from a father, we certainly have within us the image of some person, to whom our love and veneration look, in whose smile we find our happiness, for whom we yearn, towards whom we direct our pleadings, in whose anger we are troubled and waste away. . . . ‘The wicked flees, when no one pursueth;’ then why does he flee? Whence his terror? Who is it that he sees in solitude, in darkness, in the hidden chambers of his heart? If the cause of these emotions

does not belong to this visible world, the object to which his perception is directed must be Supernatural and Divine; and thus the phenomena of Conscience, as a dictate, avail to impress the imagination with the picture of a Supreme Governor, a Judge, holy, just, powerful, all-seeing, retributive, and is the creative principle of religion, as the Moral Sense is the principle of ethics."¹

Plato and Kant had joined hands and laid them on Newman. Conscience, imperative and absolute, drawing from out of its purity images of the real things that are not seen, is described in these few and beautiful pages with a terseness, simplicity, and distinction, which a man might think it worth the surrender of a lifetime to achieve. All the theology of the Oxford Movement, from Keble's "Christian Year," and Pusey's sermons down to Ward's articles in the "British Critic" and "Ideal of a Christian Church" was contained in the saying that the pure in heart shall see God; which, as Newman said, was not primarily theology at all, but religion. And the importance of the "Grammar of Assent" lies in this that it has finally transferred the vindication of creeds from the schools to the market-place, from deduction to experience. The claim that it makes can be put on its trial by all. It is simply that if a man is not to stunt his religious growth he will be driven along the path of doctrine by a movement as irresistible

¹ "Grammar of Assent," p. 110.

as it is slow; that from the belief in moral obligation he will be forced into a belief in God, and from a belief in God into a belief in the Trinity, and from a belief in the Trinity¹ into a belief in the Real Presence, and so on until the cycle of doctrine is all complete, and each and every part of it taken into a man's self as sustenance like the elemental nutriments of the human frame without which the body will sicken and pine.

It was at this point that Newman is thought to have touched a famous movement of to-day. For Biblical criticism indeed he cared next to nothing,² though one can imagine from some pages on an emendation of Shakespeare,³ how sharply he would have put the critics to the question, forcing them down from the vastest fabric of erudition to the yet vaster substructure of assumption that must always lie below. And for the monstrous philosophy of Modernism, which perverts the very name of truth, and feeds the will with "facts" which the intellect refuses; which dissolves the Easter faith in Christ's physical resurrection into some figment of a message about immortality, or the incarnation of the Son of God into a beautiful but unsubstantial legend, he

¹ "Grammar of Assent," p. 127.

² He wrote, however, a very interesting, though very tentative, reply to Renan's strictures upon the Roman theory of the inspiration of Scripture, in the *Nineteenth Century* for Feb. 1884.

³ "Grammar of Assent," pp. 271-277.

would have felt nothing but disgust. But like the Modernists he did take the will as guide, believing (as they do not believe) that it will lead the intellect into all truth. The second part of the "Grammar of Assent" is therefore a vindication on rational grounds of the truth of Christianity. The simple unquestioning assent, identified as material certitude, which the devout but uninstructed Christian gives to the Catholic faith,¹ needs to be amplified in the complex assent or intellectual certitude of the thoughtful believer.

Reason now comes into action, and doubts follow close upon its heels. For one does not need to live long to discover that many more people appear to enjoy certainty than can possibly be right. Liberal politicians and Tory statesmen, Catholic inquisitors and Protestant heretics, Christian martyrs and pagan judges all appear to have possessed at least the appearance of assured principles. They cannot all have been right, and it is impossible to prove to demonstration that they were not all of them wrong. Of what earthly use then is certitude? Newman gets out of this by drawing a distinction (not to be confused with a difference) between certitude and conviction. Considered assent, he says in effect, with fine, if unconscious, humour, is certitude until it be abandoned; if it be abandoned, it is

¹ It has been cleverly said that Newman places Authority (*i.e.*, the Catholic Church) in the same place in his philosophy of religion as Hume places Custom in his philosophy of sensation. Fairbairn, "Catholicism, Roman and Anglican," p. 208.)

shown to have been no more than a conviction.¹ Thus—to supply an illustration—when Manning said that nothing could shake his belief in the presence of Christ in the English Church and Sacraments,² he had only conviction; when he became convinced of the truth of the Roman Catholic doctrine about these things, he possessed certitude.

Delivered of its subtleties, the argument once more becomes forcible. Convictions, of some sort, it is clear, are a necessary of life. If you do not believe the sun will rise to-morrow, you will hardly do the work of to-day. But these convictions lack intellectual cogency, are conclusions which break away into a thousand doubtful premises, if we care, as we do not, to press them back upon their sources. “As to logic,” as Newman puts it, “its chain of conclusions hangs loose at both ends, both the point from which the proof should start, and the points at which it should arrive, are beyond its reach—it comes short both of first principles and of concrete issues.”³ His genius was astonishingly varied. He was no biologist or metaphysician, but as before in his theory of development he had hit upon the method of Darwin, so now he anticipated the “Foundations of Belief.”⁴

¹ “Grammar of Assent,” p. 258.

² Purcell, “Life of Manning,” i. p. 329.

³ “Grammar of Assent,” p. 284.

⁴ Wilfred Ward, “Problems and Persons,” p. 147.

Formal inference in life being proved impossible, we are driven to admit that in all our practical judgments we have parted company with logical demonstration. Our reason has been forced to accept much less proof than it pretends to require. The greatest minds show this in a marked degree; genius transcending knowledge, and reaching its goal by intuition.¹ Though our mental horizon is shut in by probabilities we must act as if we are sure. For if probability be the guide of life, certitude is its vital spark. Is it not, then, plain that in our complex frame there exists some faculty which keeps the fire alive as zealously as a vestal virgin? This faculty Newman names the Illative Sense, and by it we can survey with effect whole series of phenomena which it would take us a lifetime to appraise and classify according to logical method. It enables us of its own intrinsic merit to take different standpoints in regarding the universe—the scientific one, or that of initial causes, and the theological one, or that of final causes.² But it is defective, inasmuch as it furnishes no common measure between mind and mind, as logic can and does.³ For this reason its inferences are intensely personal.⁴

No one knew his own strength better than Newman. He had carried men with him from the first because of his wonderful gift of unaffected self-revelation. He had never, any more than his

¹ "Grammar of Assent," pp. 331-333.

² *Ibid.*, p. 372.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 362.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

Master, made religion primarily dogmatic. He had rested it always on experiences—experiences felt and experiences desired. Now as he drew towards his threescore years and ten, he was not likely to be unfaithful to that method of evangelisation, of which in his time he was the greatest master. The last chapters of the “Grammar of Assent” on Natural and Revealed Religion, are just a confession of faith, beautiful as the confession of Polycarp before the Pro-consul: “Eighty and six years have I been His Servant, and He has never wronged me, but ever has preserved me; and how can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?”¹

It is nothing, after all, but the old intuitive conviction brought to demonstration in his own long life, and urged once again with increasing force and pathos, as time drew to its close for the writer—that the pure in heart, not only shall see God, but do see Him.

The arguments, too, are the old ones—conscience and duty and a Moral Governor, prayer made and answered, sin confessed and taken away, a particular providence—things of which the world is mostly tired of hearing, but that fall upon the ear like a long-forgotten melody, learned at a mother’s knee, when Newman repeats them. He never feared a difficulty nor shirked one, and the strength of his reason is the strength of one

¹ Quoted on p. 480 of the “Grammar of Assent.”

who has measured the forces of opposition. The criticism of Christianity, which has most weight with thinking men at the present time, he meets very differently from the popular preacher. He never attempts to deny that beside the sunny religion of Greek culture and civilisation, the Christian faith looks stern and forbidding. It would be strange if it were otherwise, when the fact of sin is the one postulate of Christianity—the corner-stone upon which the whole fabric is reared. The real question, as he sees, is not which of the two views of life is the more alluring, but which is the more conformable to Nature.¹ And Nature speaks with no uncertain voice. In the dim mysterious rites of primitive peoples—hideous sacrifices to propitiate angry gods, dark sayings seeking to uncover the mysteries of the tomb, haunting fears of an underworld governed by ministers of vengeance—the intuitions of humanity are apparent. Culture and philosophy sweep them aside with easy grace. Christianity reads their meaning and consecrates it.

Leslie Stephen, busy always with a religion in which he was sure he did not believe, said

¹ "Grammar of Assent," pp. 395, 396. Newman's argument does not seem to the present writer to suffer any vital injury, because we can now (or think we can now) penetrate to a yet earlier period "in which the sense of sin, in any proper sense of the word, did not exist at all, and the whole object of ritual was to maintain the bond of physical holiness that kept the religious community together." (Robertson Smith, "Religion of the Semites," p. 401.)

with his usual trenchant candour that Newman had intuitions, but that he had none.¹ Good people, who are proud to call themselves men of the world, have no doubt felt the same. Newman would not have been much disconcerted. He would have said that if a man paid so much attention to such faculties as his senses and his reason he was eminently irrational to neglect the leadings of his conscience;² and, if it had been retorted (as it certainly would have been) that conscience is no more than an inherited register of the experience of the race, he would have said it was impossible to argue against what was as extraordinary a piece of wilful self-depreciation as of blatant self-assertion. But he would have added in tones, to which we are now better accustomed, that we know far too little of other men's hearts and opportunities to draw conclusions; that our business is with ourselves.³

We are done with Newman's theology, and must presently be done with him. Yet something remains to be said. The years in the Church of Rome were years of a great peace untroubled by doubts.⁴ From time to time, indeed, public events drew him from his shell. Pusey in 1864, and Gladstone ten years after, excited him by their attacks to vindicate the later

¹ L. Stephen, "An Agnostic's Apology," p. 12.

² "Parochial and Plain Sermons," i. p. 200.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 82.

⁴ "Apologia," p. 238.

dogmas of the Roman Church—the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin,¹ and the Infallibility of the Pope.² In each case he had been wounded in an especially tender spot. Students of his works have noticed that for all his Catholic learnings he had been from the first essentially an Englishman,³ and the English character is, or was, peculiarly sensitive to accusations of effeminacy or disloyalty. Pusey charged Roman Catholics with the one on account of the veneration accorded to the Virgin Mary; Gladstone with the other on account of the decrees of the Vatican Council.

The "Eirenicon" of 1864, indeed, cried peace, but went on to show that there was none. Pusey found the Roman Church fascinating in her appearance, but incredible in certain of her beliefs, and intolerable in some of her prayers. Roman forms, in fact, would not fit with English feelings. Most of all he fixed upon the cult of Mary, whom, as Newman reminded him, the Council of Ephesus had called (according to the popular but too highly-coloured translation) the Mother of God. Newman's reply was a dignified one, traced the doctrine back to Justin Martyr, and deprecated the excesses of Roman Catholic devotion.

"Of all passions," the writer said, "love is the

¹ Published in 1854.

² Published in 1870.

³ *E.g.*, Thureau-Dangin, "*La Renaiss. Cath.*," iii. p. 99.

most unmanageable ; nay, more, I would not give much for that love which is never extravagant, which always observes the proprieties, and can move about in perfect good taste under all emergencies." ¹

Gladstone's pamphlet of 1874 on the Vatican Decrees made no attempt to keep its rebukes, like Pusey's, plaintive as the murmurings of a river. It was all violence, storm, and flood. Rome had set her face against civilisation ; Infallibility was a hideous mummy torn from a sarcophagus ; Roman Catholics were traitors in principle to their secular sovereign. Newman was pained at the quarter from which this language came, but answered it with the moderation that became a gentleman. The "Encyclical" of 1864, in which Pio Nono had set his face against the modern temper, was, he pointed out, the exact expression of a habit of mind, manifest not so long before in Test and Corporation Acts in the statute-book of Protestant England. Times had changed ; it was not evident that they had changed for the better. The Pope might be right after all, and at least had stuck to his guns. "Toryism, that is loyalty to persons, springs immortal in the human breast ; . . . religion is a spiritual loyalty ; and . . . Catholicity is the only Divine form of religion." ² As for the Infallibility doctrine, of the promulga-

¹ "Diff. of Anglicans," ii. p. 80.

² "Diff. of Anglicans," ii. p. 268.

tion of which he had been no advocate, it was as well to understand it. The Pope was infallible only when he spoke on matters of faith or morals in his capacity as Universal Shepherd, and for the edification of the whole Church. Guarded in this way, the dogma became, as a later historian has thought it,¹ rather a safeguard than a stumbling-block, for Catholic obedience had in some quarters run almost into servility. In this way, too, Pope Honorius, condemned by an œcumenical council for heresy, was got off—none too easily. He was not exercising his pastoral office, Newman said, when he fell into error.² Gladstone's alarm about the loyalty of British Roman Catholics would, his opponent added, subside if that statesman would reflect that conflicts between the religious laws of Pio Nono, and the secular ones of Queen Victoria, far from being matters as he appeared to suppose of daily occurrence, could scarcely happen.³

Time has made Gladstone's pamphlet with its tremendous language and its vast circulation look uncommonly foolish. Beautiful Liberalism, embodying the spirit of progress and denounced by Pope Pius, by the casting of its skin has slid somehow into ugly Labour. Liberty has got lost in Equality and Fraternity. Roman Catholics, open to strong suspicion of divided allegiance,

¹ Thureau-Dangin, "La Renaiss. Cath," iii. p. 114.

² "Diff. of Anglicans," ii. pp. 316, 317.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

sit in Cabinets, sat even in one of Gladstone's own making. An English sovereign, sworn against Popery, has attended service in a Roman Cathedral at Westminster. An English Princess sits beside the Most Catholic King. Nor, unless the signs of the times are strangely misleading, is that to be the end.

Also, in one or two private contests, Time, 'that great auxiliary of the Church and of Truth,' as Montalembert called it, has been on Newman's side. The libel action brought against him by a renegade priest called Achilli for a very plain attack upon this person's character, incorporated in his "Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England,"¹ is hardly worth a mention. The jury, it is true, found for Achilli, but it was middle-class and in the fashion of the time ultra-Protestant, so that there is pretty good reason, as Newman's biographers² have contended, to distrust its competence.

Then there was a constant antagonism with Manning, which neither letters nor masses³ served altogether to dispel. The real cause of division lay, as in these cases it generally does, in the natures of the men themselves—one was a statesman and the other an evangelist—but the question of policy, in which the division was disclosed, regarded the proper attitude to be adopted

¹ Pp. 207-210.

² Hutton ; Meynell.

³ Thureau-Dangin, "La Renaiss. Cath.," iii. p. 89.

toward the Anglicans. Newman, eager to make his countrymen into his co-religionists, and his co-religionists into his countrymen, saw in the abolition of University tests (in 1854) an opportunity of getting a definitely English education for the Roman Catholic youth, and of establishing a missionary settlement of Oratorians, with himself at the head, to shield them from contamination, and to be at the same time the centre of an active propaganda.¹ Manning, on the other hand, was ultramontane to the core, cared nothing for Anglicans as such, and wished to keep the breach between the two communions wide and difficult. The chief point was, of course, to get the ear of the Vatican, and for that he was better qualified than his opponent. But his power ended with his life, and Newman had the English Romans at his back all the while, so that Roman Catholics, as every one knows, run the religious risks of a University education like the rest of the world, and with far better success.

The other controversial affair which marred the peace of the Birmingham Oratory was Kingsley's unwise attack on Newman's innocence. The Protestant novelist affirmed that the Catholic clergy condoned falsehood, and that Newman was no exception to the rule. The world was grateful to him, not for his allegations (which so far as

See Thureau-Dangin, "La Renaiss. Cath.," ii. p. 374 ; iii. p. 82.

they were general, were about as true as other charges against the good faith of the human race, and so far as they were particular, were not true at all), but for the effect of them, which was to draw Newman to vindicate his career in an "Apologia." That beautiful book sets him beside the four or five famous people who have dared plainly and without reserve to write their own spiritual biography. It is a task which requires either great conceit or great humility. Augustine did it to catch souls for the kingdom of God; Rousseau did it to prove himself a good citizen of the world; Amiel (if Amiel was a great man) did it to be quit of the groanings which could not be uttered. But of the four that have been named, Newman's book, like his character, because of his character, is by far the noblest. Neither the sensuality of Augustine, nor the egotism of Rousseau, nor the weakness of Amiel soils his pages. From first to last his candle had burnt with a clear, steady flame, and Kingsley had taken away the bushel that covered it.

These things are obvious. It is obvious, too, that the "Apologia" is the book by which his great claims as a writer of pure English will be carried down from generation to generation. Time had mellowed his style. The ruggedness, which is apparent in the "Parochial and Plain Sermons," had changed to a tender, graceful, almost effeminate diction; an effect which is

directly traceable to the cult of the Virgin and of St Philip Neri, both of whom were very constantly in his thoughts. What had been lost in power had been more than recovered in pathos. He had always been a musician, as became one in whose veins there ran a strong current of Jewish blood, and the quality of his language grew ever more musical. One might say that he plays more truly than that he colours.¹ Yet it is a mistake to think that the excellence of his writing is apparent to the casual observer. The critics, indeed, are agreed for once, and because of their agreement they have fixed public opinion beyond a chance of change. But, whilst any man of ordinary literary perceptions could not fail to recognise in the presence of Macaulay or Froude or Pater that he had met with something very rare and good, it is more than doubtful how many men, ignorant of the context, would be aware of anything especially remarkable in a page of Newman. This is no doubt partly due to the fact that his manner was as businesslike as it was delicate, and proved a model which ordinary men found serviceable and made common. Lawyers, for example, say that Newman would have written a very good Opinion. But besides this it is certain that, like all very perfect things, his style requires to be much looked at before it is truly admired, and that the homage paid to it is

¹ See W. Barry, "Newman," pp. 9, 34, 35, 60.

often simply conventional. Devoid of all show and glitter, *simplex munditiis*, always very plain and neat, it made its way because it was the vehicle of thoughts that much needed to be spoken; and only afterwards did men realise that the vehicle itself was beautiful. The proof of its excellence, if proof be required, is that it is impossible to caricature it. Newman was so great that he was able to model it upon its antithesis. As in his teaching he set up the simplicity of the primitive Church against the splendour of the Roman Empire, so in his style he chose the household words of common talk to rebuke the classical tongue of Gibbon and Johnson. Rolling sentences and majestic periods had to give way before the filtered language of the street and the market-place. His limpid English was the purest current in the stream of imaginative writing which Carlyle and Ruskin had set in motion, and which, as has lately been suggested, served in the end to confuse the true functions of poetry and prose. Newman at least never fell into fault, never framed turgid or tumultuous sentences. Like Bunyan he was a conservative liberator, and freed the language from a certain stiffness of diction, whilst preserving for it an easy dignity. Nor is it any accident that these two writers of the purest English were deeply religious men. Stateliness and majesty he had not, nor cared to have.

The description of Athens in his "University Sketches"¹—at once a contrast and a parallel to Gibbon's description of Constantinople—has long been recognised as possessing the highest merit. Such English had not been written since the days of Addison, and goes far to show that, but for the deep vein of religion in him, he would have been a purveyor of that light scholarly literature which began with the *Spectator*, and concluded in the "Essays of Elia." Of Jane Austen's novels he is said to have been very fond.

The impulse, which the Oxford men gave to historical study, was more than once commended by Mill. Newman's own most serious historical work was upon "The Arians." It suffers from want of proportion, but three cognate points, probably unfamiliar to English readers at that time, were well brought out—that the absence of theological definition is primitive and ideal;² that the Arians were the successors of the Judaizers,³ and that they really emanated from the school of Antioch, not of Alexandria.⁴ But he always wrote history with a purpose. "Never make a mistake in your logic," said a famous counsel to his devils; "the facts remain at your disposal." No one knew the truth of that better than Newman, nor did he attempt to conceal

¹ "Hist. Sketches," iii., pp. 18-46.

² "The Arians of the Fourth Century," p. 36.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, section 2.

it. "It is the Church's dogmatic use of History," he said, "in which the Catholic believes."¹

Of one of his greatest literary talents, he only became sensible in middle life. There is not much trace of irony in his Oxford work; yet in the end he proved a master in the craft, keen, finished, able to pierce the very joints and marrow. Of this his reply to Kingsley, which he did not allow to appear in the "Apologia," the opening chapter of the "Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England," and his novel, "Loss and Gain," depicting the young men of the Oxford Movement, are probably the best examples.

Irony is humour in the hands of a moralist. Christ used it, and some of his noblest labourers have kept it among their tools. But Newman gave it an edge, which makes one shudder. In one of his Roman Catholic sermons, the soul, life's little journey past and over, is brought face to face with Christ. The recording angel opens his books; the long roll of sins and follies is read out; the sinner stands condemned.

"'Impossible,' he cries, 'I a lost soul. I separated from hope and from peace for ever. It is not I of whom the Judge so spake! There is a mistake somewhere; Christ, Saviour, hold Thy hand—one minute to explain it. My name is Demas: I am but Demas, not Judas, or Nicolas, or Alexander, or Philetus, or Diotrophes. What?

¹ "Diff. of Anglicans," ii. p. 312.

hopeless pain! for me! Impossible, it shall not be.' And the poor soul struggles and wrestles in the grasp of the mighty demon which has hold of it, and whose very touch is torment. 'Oh, atrocious!' it shrieks in agony, and in anger, too, as if the very keenness of the affliction were a proof of its injustice. 'A second! and a third! I can bear no more! stop, horrible fiend, give over; I am a man and not such as thou! I am not food for thee, or sport for thee! I never was in hell as thou, I have not on me the smell, nor the taint of the charnel-house. I know what human feelings are; I have been taught religion; I have had a conscience; I have a cultivated mind; I am well versed in science and art; I have been refined by literature; I have had an eye for the beauties of Nature; I am a philosopher or a poet, or a shrewd observer of men, or a hero, or a statesman, or an orator, or a man of wit and humour. Nay—I am a Catholic; I am not an unregenerate Protestant; I have received the grace of the Redeemer; I have attended the Sacraments for years; I have been a Catholic from a child; I am a son of the martyrs; I died in communion with the Church; nothing, nothing which I have ever been, which I have ever seen, bears any resemblance to thee, and to the flame and stench which exhale from thee; so I defy thee and abjure thee, O enemy of man!'

"Alas! poor soul, and whilst it thus fights with that destiny which it has brought upon itself, and with those companions whom it has chosen, the man's name, perhaps, is solemnly chanted forth, and his memory decently cherished among his friends on earth. His readiness in speech, his fertility in thought, his sagacity, or his wisdom

are not forgotten. Men talk of him from time to time, they appeal to his authority; they quote his words; perhaps they even raise a monument to his name, or write his history. 'So comprehensive a mind! Such a power of throwing light on a perplexed subject, and bringing conflicting ideas or facts into harmony!' 'Such a speech it was he made on such and such an occasion; I happened to be present, and never shall forget it,' or, 'It was the saying of a very sensible man,' or, 'A great personage, whom some of us knew'; or, 'It was a rule with a very worthy and excellent friend of mine, now no more,' or, 'Never was his equal in society, so just in his remarks, so versatile, so unobtrusive,' or, 'I was fortunate to see him once when I was a boy,' or, 'So great a benefactor to his country and to his kind!' 'His discoveries so great,' or, 'His philosophy so profound.' O vanity! vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profiteth it? His soul is in hell. . . . Vanity of vanities! misery of miseries! they will not attend to us, they will not believe us. We are but a few in number, and they are many, and the many will not give credit to the few. . . . Thousands are dying daily; they are waking up into God's everlasting wrath"¹

This is the same voice that said with reiterated emphasis that it was a mere preamble to the faith of the Catholic Church,

"that it is better for the sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions on it to die of starvation in extremest agony, as far as temporal affliction

¹ "Discourses to Mixed Congregation," pp. 39, 40.

goes, than that one soul not only should be lost but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one wilful untruth, or should steal one poor farthing without excuse.”¹

Jeanie Deans, who was not a Catholic, behaved as if she believed something of the same kind. But Sir Leslie Stephen remarked with much asperity that the statement was either shocking or meaningless.² And modern society, without troubling overmuch to find its reasons, has decided that this sort of thing is inconvenient, and shall be said no more, so that Church dignitaries have to be busy in interpreting texts and clipping creeds. Such hard work is it to preach the Gospel!

Ironical humour it is reasonable to suspect was Newman's besetting temptation. On the one side it led him to indulge in a luxury of horror; on the other it betrayed him into strange sallies of bad taste. Charles Reding, the hero in "Loss and Gain," brought after many struggles to the very edge of the Roman Communion, is beset in his last moments of hesitation by numberless officious Protestant secretaries anxious to turn the tide. A kind of John Kensit at length appears and proves more intolerable than the rest. Reding, his patience utterly worn out, snatches up a crucifix as the most popish symbol

¹ "Apologia," p. 247; "Diff. of Anglicans," i. p. 240.

² "Science of Ethics" (2nd ed.), p. 369.

at hand, and, advancing upon the intruder, drives him forth as effectually as if he had threatened his eyes with vitriol.¹ When one considers what a crucifix represents, most of all to a Roman Catholic, one is disagreeably conscious that Newman's anti-Protestant enthusiasm has carried him beyond the limit of what is decent.

Jean Paul, in one of those paradoxes which one remembers, said that no one really believed in his religion who could not afford to jest about it.² On some such principle as this, as Kingsley thought,³ it is alone possible to defend the mockery of the demons in the "Dream of Gerontius." Their language shows at least that Newman had taken the full measure of the forces against which he set his face, and of the service to which he had given in his allegiance. And that wonderful poem, tossed into a rubbish-basket, and saved only by the diligence of a friend, is indeed and in every respect the embodiment of the author's most intimate thoughts, the crown and prize of a long day of toil and struggle.

Any one who can enter into the spirit of it, has understood Newman, and those who think with him, and what they are about; for Gerontius explains, as no other has ever explained to the modern world, why it is that life needs to be

¹ "Loss and Gain," p. 412.

² Quoted in the "Life of Charles Kingsley," ii. p. 271.

³ *Ibid.*

hard, rough, and difficult, and full of prayers and watchings. He had not been a bad man, and in his last sickness the prayers of friends and the administration of the sacraments have greatly consoled him. Yet he has died alone,¹ and as he passes up in a moment of time into the presence of God, he becomes aware of his awful loneliness. He is no longer sheltered by his fellowmen, nor can any more think of himself as a social unit. Then at last, as he beholds the Beatific Vision, he grows sick with love and horror—love for the “pleading in *His* pensive eyes,” and horror that a thing like himself, foul with every defilement, should have drawn so near to One, altogether pure. The famous lines follow :—

“Take me away, and in the lowest deep,
 There let me be,
And there in hope the lone night watches keep,
 Told out for me
There, motionless and happy in my pain—
 Lone, not forlorn,
There will I sing my sad perpetual strain
 Until the morn.
There will I sing, and soothe my stricken breast,
 Which ne’er can cease
To throb, and pine, and languish, till possess
 Of its sole Peace.
There will I sing my absent Lord and Love—
 Take me away,
That sooner I may rise, and go above,
And see Him in the truth of everlasting day.”²

¹ *Cp.* Pascal, “On mourra seul.”

² *Verses on Various Occasions*,” p. 367.

But what need is there to repeat lines which every one knows who is at all worthy to know them!

Gerontius, says an ardent Spencerian of the first scene in the poem, died in an improper frame of mind; he ought to have been thinking unselfishly of others right up to the end.¹ And, indeed, it was a very foolish frame of mind, if our main business in this so brief life is to rear a fine breed of citizens, like fowls or cattle, with the aid of expert advice. It was, in fact, one of the main effects of Newman's life and teaching that he disentangled issues which had long been confounded and sharply distinguished the supernatural life, which is exacted of all Christians, from the natural existence, admirable in its way, but also animal, which is pursued by the vast majority of us. He never flinched from upholding 'the humble monk and holy nun,' whom nearly every one has laughed at, although with no better reason perhaps than the cultured society of the Roman Empire laughed at the early Christians. And it is because he so mercilessly brought to the light the real claims and obligations of Christianity, that, as a recent Bampton lecturer² has seen, the world is no longer so busy considering whether the Christian faith be true as whether the Christian life be possible. Though he anticipated, before 1833,

¹ Saleeby, "Ethics," p. 115. ² Peile's Bampton Lectures, 1907.

the coming attack on the authenticity of the Bible narratives,¹ his diagnosis of the malady of the body ecclesiastic went far deeper than that, and his life became a prolonged attack on Liberalism. His insight was so rare and fine that the historian who condemned his secession to Rome on grounds of expediency would be singularly audacious. Pan - Anglican Synods, multiplied services, signal examples of clerical heroism, do not veil the fact from the shrewd observer that the English Church is but poorly equipped to meet the exigencies of the religious situation. It was as a society of gentlemen that she made her way. When gentlemen are no longer of much account, it is not clear how she can retain her hold on the public affections, except it be by an adoption of the Roman system. But this is to give away more than half her case. Perhaps it may some day be considered the highest evidence of Newman's judgment that he perceived with De Maistre that Rome with her wonderful tradition of spiritual culture is the best bulwark against the advances of a material civilisation, the only fortress strong enough to fly the flag something more than half-mast high.

But it is not the business of the student of history to try to read the signs of the times. On his own generation Newman's influence, apart from its moral bearing, told in the direction

¹ "Apologia," p. 9.

of making Englishmen respectful and tolerant towards Roman Catholicism. This he had in common with Wiseman and Manning. Like them he passed through a long fire of unpopularity to be loved and honoured and accounted a national distinction. The Cardinal's hat came to him in 1879, when Leo XIII. had replaced Pio Nono; and England was proud of it. He himself was, of course, long past the age—if he had ever known it—at which hats or coronets are of any consequence whatever. But he was gratified to see that the long censure upon himself had been reversed as well among his countrymen as in Rome. The event, however, appeared too astounding to be altogether comfortable, and his thoughts ran off to Polycrates.¹

Then, after ten more quiet years at Birmingham, the end came. He died in the fulness of his days, having vindicated in his life the excellence and purity of his ideals. For those who agree with his main contention—that a pursuit of the highest attainable life is the only guarantee of a right judgment in all matters of spiritual importance, that as he was fond of saying "*non in dialecticā complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum*"—and who yet cannot follow him into the Church of Rome, the difficulty remains (and it is a very great one) that a

¹ "Addresses to Cardinal Newman," p. 319.

man of such purity, goodness, and self-devotion should have fallen into error in the very maturity of his powers.

The criticisms that have been directed against him fall into two classes. On the one hand he is accused of unbelief, on the other of credulity.

Huxley, in an oft-quoted sentence, said that he would engage to extract a little manual of scepticism from the Cardinal's writings. So might a little manual of religion be extracted from those of Huxley.¹ But the charge, of course, goes deeper than this, and in this deeper sense it is justified. Newman, however, is in good company. The same thing was said of Pascal and Butler, and will be said of every man who brings a keen and patient intellect to bear upon the mysteries of religion. It is in the very nature of things that this should be so. Faith is necessary because sight is unattainable, and cannot by hypothesis give any complete present intellectual account of her beliefs. But she is innocent of any sort of fraud, for it is precisely belief, not knowledge, that she offers. The man of science has less reason to complain of her than she of him, for his knowledge, so solid and convincing in the laboratory, dissolves afresh in the study of the metaphysician, and we become once more the little children of Newton's simile

¹ A remark of Hutton, "Cardinal Newman," p. 59.

picking up a few shells on the sea-shore of time. To this extent, indeed, Newman was sceptical, that he never encouraged us to expect to be very much else. He thought it rationalism to ask to be told 'the why and how of God's dealings with us.'¹ For him, as for Pascal, the world had been the theatre of some aboriginal calamity of so dire and disastrous a character that it has left man as we see him—the negation of his own nobility.

It is at this point that the alternative charge comes into view. Newman, it is said, despised reason, and in consequence fell a prey to credulity. He took imagination as his guide, thinks Dr Abbott,² and became as the blind that lead the blind. Dr Barry says the same: "With Newman Imagination was Reason."³ Newman himself was not of this opinion.⁴ Had it been so, he said, he would have been a Roman Catholic sooner than he was.⁵ The question, of course, really is, whether any one can get through life by making himself a reasoning machine; whether, indeed, such a thing is possible at all; whether tradition, circumstance, temperament, success and failure, above all and for the best men, as Newman himself thought, personal influence,⁶ are not always and in the

¹ "Ess. Crit. and Hist." i. p. 32; *Cp.* "Ess. on Develop.," p. 191.

² Abbott, "Anglican Career," i. pp. 58-60.

³ Barry, "Newman," p. 21.

⁴ "Oxf. Univ. Sermon," p. 9.

⁵ "Apologia," p. 119.

⁶ "Oxf. Univ. Sermon," Sermon v.

nature of things the predominant sources of opinion. If they prove to be, Newman's method was amply justified. Religion and her daughter Poetry then become the channels of spiritual vitality, and Reason just no more than the corrective of extravagance. However this may be, Newman never flinched from his view that credulity was better than scepticism.¹ On the other hand, he kept his mind open, and was always ready to admit evidence in disproof of particular cases of miraculous intervention.²

The interest of his life and character is inexhaustible. Romance, which he, following in the wake of Scott and Coleridge, did so much to revive, clings about his own career. He seeks the vision of the Holy Grail, like a mediæval knight, confident that it is for the appointed time, and will surely come and will not tarry; and his patience is at last rewarded, and he attains the perfect resignation, which he holds to be the purpose of this life, and the earnest of the next.³ His career is checked, of course, by mistakes and confusions. The historian, as Seeley somewhere points out, only knows of one career that was achieved with unerring wisdom.⁴ Yet

¹ "Oxf. Univ. Sermon," p. 220.

² "Apologia," p. 309.

³ "Parochial and Plain Sermons," viii. Sermon ix.

⁴ Seeley, "Ecce Homo," p. 20. "No other career ever had so much unity. . . . Christ formed one plan and executed it: no important change took place in his mode of thinking, speaking, or acting; at least the evidence before us does not enable us to trace any such change."

this essay has sadly missed its point, if his inconsistencies appear anything but superficial.

Again, a recent critic has pronounced him a mystery.¹ But indeed he is no mystery, except to those who make it. He strove always, and with all his faculties, to recover for mankind the Highest Life that the earth has seen, and the real mystery, as he would have said, is that so few men care to do the same.

¹ Bremond's psychological essay on Newman is translated under the title of "The Mystery of Newman."

AUTHORITIES

A collected edition of Newman's more important works is published by Longmans, Green & Co., and has been used here.

The authorities for his life and work, and the criticisms of them are, of course, very numerous. The following list does not lay claim to any completeness:—

There are lives of Newman, by R. H. Hutton—the best; by Dr Barry—the most suggestive; by W. Meynell and H. J. Jennings. The authoritative life of Newman is being written by Mr Wilfred Ward.

The principal contemporary authorities for his life are the "Apologia pro vita sua," by himself; R. W. Church's "History of the Oxford Movement," and various essays in "Occasional Papers"; J. A. Froude's "The Oxford Counter-Reformation" in "Short Studies"; Mark Pattison's "Memoirs"; Shairp, "Studies in Poetry and Philosophy"; F. W. Newman, "Contributions to the Early History of Cardinal Newman"; "The Memoirs of W. C. Lake"; and "The Letters and Correspondence of J. H. Newman during his life in the English Church," by Anne Mozley.

There are studies of Newman by M. Bremond (translated under the title of "The Mystery of Newman"); by M. Dimnet in "La Pensée Catholique dans l'Angleterre Contemporaine"; and by Mr Wilfred Ward in "Problems and Persons" and "Ten Personal Studies." Thureau-Dangin ("La Renaissance Catholique en Angleterre") has written an exhaustive history of the Oxford Movement.

Attacks upon Newman are contained in—

Dr E. A. Abbott's "The Anglican Career of Cardinal Newman"; and in F. W. Newman's "Early History of Cardinal Newman."

Leslie Stephen wrote a very valuable criticism of Newman's position from an adverse standpoint in "An Agnostic's

Apology" — the chapter entitled "Newman's Theory of Belief." J. A. Froude wrote a criticism of the "Grammar of Assent" in *Short Studies*; and J. B. Mozley of "The Theory of Development" under that title. Dr E. A. Abbott's "Philomythus" is an attack on Newman's doctrine of miracles. Dr Fairbairn's "Catholicism, Roman and Anglican" is a reply to many of Newman's conclusions; and Mr W. J. Williams' "Newman, Pascal, Loisy and the Catholic Church" contains a rejoinder to Dr Fairbairn.

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R. W. CHURCH

1815-1890

The Church of England—R. W. Church a brilliant exception to the common rule—Events of his life: scholar; statesman; saint—As scholar; (a) “The Gifts of Civilisation”; The Roman Empire and Christianity; (b) Essay on “Bishop Andrewes”—The Church of England; (c) Essay on “Bishop Butler”—The basis of religion—As statesman; (a) His high qualities for statesmanship; (b) “The Guardian”; (c) St Paul’s—As saint; (a) His severity; (b) “The Ventures of Faith”; (c) Church and Newman; (d) The end; (e) His impressions of life.

“I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great Ring of pure and endless light,
All calm as it was bright;
And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years,
Driv’n by the spheres,
Like a vast shadow mov’d, in which the World
And all her train were hurl’d.”

—HENRY VAUGHAN, *The World*.

THE Church of England, when Newman came to examine it in his latter years, seemed to him a great national institution of noble memories, ancient wisdom, and political strength.¹ And no one, who looks back over its history, can feel that (at least until very recent times) it has been otherwise than aristocratic in character; remarkable among the Protestant churches for its

Newman, “Apologia,” pp. 339, 340.

dignity, scholarship, moderation, and reverence for the past ; intolerant of cant, as of fanaticism, and associated all too closely with the fortunes of the gentlemen of England. The Church of the Reformation settlement did not originate, like the churches of Scotland and northern Europe, in an irrepressible explosion of popular rage at clerical abuses, but was contrived by the three Protestant Tudors, the early Stuarts, and the new nobility established on the abbey-lands. We see this very well in the English wars of religion. When the people first got hold of the Protestant idea, they were carried off their feet by it, and heads were broken and lost that the Establishment might be saved. A hundred and seventy years later, when a revival of spiritual life was as long overdue as it was sorely needed, and after Wesley had failed precisely because he was so little of an aristocrat, it was once more a set of English gentlemen (men of letters this time instead of swordsmen) who restored the fortunes and influence of the English Church. And, indeed, this is at once the strength and the weakness of the English communion, that it discourages all extravagance and excess ; that it does all things decently and in order, is prudent for this world as well as the next, and avoids enthusiasm as well as folly. Very seldom indeed do its ministers attain any extraordinary reputation for sanctity.

Dean Church is one of the brilliant exceptions to the common rule, who have done more perhaps by their personal holiness to vindicate for the English Church its claims to be truly a limb of Catholic Christendom, than all the elaborate argumentation of divines from the days of Bishop Laud to our own.

The events of Church's life are few, and shall be written of with all the brevity which he would have desired. Born in 1815, and elected in 1838 to an Oriel Fellowship, he passed through the crisis of the Oxford Movement at the most impressionable period of his life. In 1852, on his approaching marriage, he left Oxford for Whatley, a small Somersetshire parish where he worked as rector until 1871. In that year Gladstone forced him to accept the Deanery of St Paul's, which he retained until his death in 1890, in face of several offers of promotion, virtually including that of the Archbishopric.¹ It was a period which saw great changes, and in which great issues were tried both at home and abroad, yet probably the most public occasion in his life was when, as Proctor, he vetoed the proposed vote of censure on "Tract Ninety," thus saving his master from dishonour, and his University from disgrace. He was one of those who influence the world, not by what they do, but by what they are.

¹ Mary Church, "Life and Letters of Dean Church," p. 307.

A convenient setting for his life is suggested by the subject of some of his earliest and most congenial work—St Anselm. Doubtless his catholic spirit found a particular pleasure in writing of one so eminent for excellence in the three great departments of human life—morality and thought and action. It is, at any rate, not inappropriate to group his life after the mediæval model, and consider him in turn as scholar, statesman, and saint.

Church had no enemies, but had there been such, they would scarcely have denied him the palm of wide and accurate knowledge. He knew something of science, and his review of "*Vestiges of Creation*," won the praise of Sir Richard Owen.¹ Of languages he knew more than something. Italian he had been familiar with since his childhood, and in his time he must have been the best Dante scholar in England. Besides Dante, Lucretius and Sophocles were constant companions, Shakespeare and Goethe old acquaintances, Heine not unvisited. With Montaigne and Pascal, the two eternal types, between whom men of letters pass to and fro in ceaseless flux, he was equally familiar, and had written with equal sureness of touch about both. Theology he handled with the grasp of one who has proved by experience that his beliefs are true; and of metaphysics he had a working

¹ Mary Church, "*Life and Letters of Dean Church*," p. 63.

knowledge. But it was assuredly history that he found most congenial. He possessed the two essential qualities of the old type of historian—sympathy and severity. Beneath his searching eye the movements of societies and the characters of men seem to be tried and valued by no ordinary standard. He is exquisitely sensitive to all that is noble or beautiful or grand in the life of nations or of statesmen. To every quality and every aspiration he gives its proper praise. But behind the criterion of intellectual attainment he never allows us to forget there is another—infinitely more exacting; so that what he says of Dante among poets becomes true of himself among historians:—

“No one who could understand and do homage to greatness in man, ever drew the line so strongly between greatness and goodness, and so unhesitatingly placed the hero of this world only—placed him in all his magnificence, honoured with no timid or dissembling reverence—at the distance of worlds below the place of the lowest saint.”¹

And Church never wavers in his affirmation of this uncomfortable doctrine. We find him paying the loftiest tribute to Newton, and then warning us in the immediate sequence that St Paul in one order of greatness—the greatness of goodness—was immeasurably superior to Newton in

¹ “Dante,” p. 189.

another.¹ But this is only what we should expect from one who had so perfectly assimilated all that is best in Pascal:—"Tous les corps ensemble et tous les esprits ensemble, et toutes leurs productions, ne valent pas le moindre mouvement de charité car elle est d'un ordre infiniment plus élevé." Indeed, if Acton had wished to enforce by illustration that duty of the historian to which he attached so great importance—the duty of reviewing the events and characters of history in the white light of the highest moral standard—he could have found no better example than the work of Church. What other biographer would have dreamed of opening a life of Bacon with the warning that "the life of Francis Bacon is one which it is a pain to write or to read?"² The judges of history are themselves brought before the bar. Is there elsewhere so just an appreciation of Gibbon's merits and defects as Church has contrived to fit into a sentence?

"Gibbon, who in his taste for majesty and pomp, his moral unscrupulousness and his scepticism, reflected the genius of the Empire, of which he recounted the fortunes, but who in his genuine admiration of public spirit and duty, and in his general inclination to be just to all, except only to the Christian name, reflects another and better side of Roman character."³

¹ "Human Life and its Conditions," p. 21.

² "Bacon," p. 1.

³ "Gifts of Civilisation," p. 117.

To his austerity Church unites sympathy. He has the power of throwing himself into the difficulties of a crisis, of placing himself (with a single exception, perhaps, in the case of Cromwell¹) at the standpoint of the character he has to judge, and of measuring, at least approximately, the possibilities of morality in the age of which he is writing. But when every allowance has been made, and every plea considered, the scales are dressed with rigid justice, and we seem to see the man as he will appear when the judgment is set and the books are opened. Assuredly, he who can deal thus with great causes and great characters, who can balance all without bias or prejudice, who can refrain from making surrenders to an alert and ever ready sympathy, has won the great prize of the historian, and sees things no longer in the light of time but in the light, if not of eternity, at least of its brilliant and dazzling reflection.

Beside the monographs on Dante, Anselm, Spenser, and Bacon, Church wrote a short account of the beginning of the Middle Ages—a fine attempt to execute an impossible task—and a volume of lectures on “The Gifts of Civilisation,” which, partly because of the fusion of theology and history, congenial to himself and necessary to the subject, partly because of its beautiful treatment, is perhaps the most valuable

¹ “Occasional Papers, *Carlyle's Cromwell*.”

and characteristic product of his genius. The real purpose of Christianity in the world is still perhaps as debatable a question as the real effect of Christianity upon human society. To both these problems Church endeavoured to give an answer. Newman had distrusted culture, seeing in it an 'enchantress'¹ more subtle though less gross than that of the sensual appetites which it had helped to banish.² The conflict between a visible Church and a visible world was always very much in his mind, and was not perhaps the least of his reasons for joining the Church of Rome, where the institution of the Papacy gave effect to it in a far more striking manner than any national church could ever hope to do. Until theology were once more enthroned as 'queen of the sciences,' education seemed only to spread the kingdom of anti-Christ.

Church's point of view was different. He had no exaggerated admiration of the patristic period. He saw with an unshrinking eye that the modern world is full of gifts and graces, sweetness, and light; and he was thankful that it was so.³ He did not hesitate to recognise in civilisation a great ally. But with this there came a great anxiety (which must beset every one who does not believe in an infallible society, divinely instructed to direct the moral destinies of man-

¹ "Idea of a Univ.," p. 235.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 187, 188.

³ "Gifts of Civilisation," p. 93.

kind) lest Church history should have been, after all, the spectacle of a great evasion.¹ The first Christians had fled from war and competitive trade and legal process; those who are reckoned good Christians to-day are employed in all of them.² "The obvious answer," he reflects, "and we hope the true one, is that God has appointed society, and that society means these consequences."³ This is not, perhaps, the most forcible way of putting the case. Christ dealt with man as man; society deals with him as a citizen. If Slavery was not incompatible with Christianity, neither War nor Trade nor Law can have been so.

The second part of the book is occupied with the other question—the effect of Christianity upon the tissue of society. Church begins by enquiring into the state of the Roman Commonwealth in the first century before Christ, and finds it, as many, but not quite all,⁴ have thought it, rotten to the core. A period of unequalled triumph had been succeeded by a painful decay. It was not so much that aspiration had diminished, or ability declined, or devotion to the public service disappeared; but somehow the old forces were no longer producing the old effects. Men had outgrown the religious conceptions of their forefathers, and the popular new-fangled creeds

¹ "Gifts of Civilisation," p. 36.

² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³ *Ibid* p. 34.

⁴ *E.g.* Dill.

had no power to stir their souls. So the baser-minded citizens had steeped themselves in licence, and the nobler in despair. At the crisis of this unaccountable lethargy Rome came into contact with Christianity, and bathed herself deeply at the sources of life. Emerging rejuvenated and restored, she entered upon another epoch and fulfilled another destiny. In her fresh strength she kept the gate of civilisation against the Moslem invader, she replaced the book of resignation by the book of hope, Marcus Aurelius by St Augustine, and to the very nations which sucked her life-blood she communicated a new and marvellous vitality. It was Christianised Rome which developed imagination and chivalry in the Gaul and the Italian, stubborn determination in the fickle Greek, an insatiable pursuit of truth in Teuton. It was Rome transfused by Christianity, which, alone in the world's history, furnished an example of a nation returning upon its age.

This is a theory which carries us to the farthest limits of history, and beyond. It is interesting as the opinion of a historian of admittedly sober judgment, who thought he could discern at a time of transcendent importance in human history, the visible hand of God. It is more interesting as a direct traverse of the innuendo of Gibbon, that Christianity had been the ruin of the Roman Empire. To such a denial the Tractarians by

taste, temperament, creed, conviction, were deeply pledged. Just as Newman had reaffirmed the miraculous narratives, so Church reaffirmed the peculiar, regenerative efficacy of the Christian faith. In the long resistance of the Romans of the East to the hordes of barbarians that rolled up one after another towards the stubborn defences of New Rome, like the storms of the inhospitable sea that lies beyond it—Goths, Huns, Arabs, Moguls, Tartars, Turks, to say nothing of the Venetian merchantmen and the Latin Crusaders—he claimed to discover a moral fibre very much undervalued in the pages of the “Decline and Fall.” People of strong convictions are rather apt to determine these matters as their intuitions prompt them. Newman placed the moral in another place. Writing as a Roman Catholic, he pointed in phrases most exquisitely attuned, to

“the divinely appointed shepherd of the poor of Christ, the anxious steward of His Church, who from his high and ancient watch-tower, in the fulness of apostolic charity, surveyed narrowly what was going on at thousands of miles from him, and with prophetic eye looked into the future age.”¹

New Rome, he meant, had perished because it had cut itself adrift from old Rome. Denial of the papal claims had led on to schism; schism

¹ Newman, “Historical Sketches,” i. p. 97.

to moral and material destruction.¹ Finlay, who knew more about the Byzantine Empire than most people, and who, as we have seen, had given full credit to Christianity as the unifying force in the East, which at an earlier epoch had compassed the defeat of the Goths and Huns,² thought that as time went on the Christian faith had been not so much a preserver as a thing preserved. It was to the wonderful organisation of the imperial policy that he attributed the long contest with the Saracen. "The laws of Rome, rather than the military power of the Emperor, saved Christianity."³ And indeed, in that turbulent society of Constantinople where theological controversies, often in themselves idle, and worse than idle, were degraded besides into being the party politics of the day, it is hard to believe that religious professions added any spark of vitality to the declining vigour of the Empire.

Is not the Byzantine history of the eighth century a complete refutation of the view to which Church gave expression? The mysteries of Christianity had by that time taken such a hold of the popular imagination as they have never done, perhaps, anywhere before or since. Men thought about them, talked of them, argued them at the street corners, in the market-places. The

¹ Newman, "Historical Sketches," i. p. 150.

² Finlay, "History of Greece," i. p. 138. ³ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 23.

people were intoxicated with the subtleties of theological discussion. There was a licence of thought all the more remarkable because there was no liberty of opinion. Painting and sculpture grew to be a public peril. Leo the Isaurian, the Charles Martel of the East, is best remembered as Leo the Iconoclast, the enemy of monks, priests, silly women, and superstitious observances. In the pious practices of devotion, he discovered the cancer of the national life, and his reforming zeal was suggested by the simplicity of that very religion of Islam,¹ whose adherents he repelled from the walls of Constantinople. One may say, with some show of reason, that the Greeks were not Catholic enough or not Protestant enough for final success, but of all alternatives the most difficult to maintain is that the 'orthodox' faith deferred the capture of Constantinople.

Church, however, was working out quite logically the philosophy of history imposed by the tenets of the Tractarians. As the Catholic faith was one, so the expressions of it were many. Unity was to be pursued, uniformity abandoned. National churches were to draw out the spiritual genius of each race, and the Temple not built with hands was to be of many styles and colours. Except to Englishmen this sort of catholicity is very strange. The history of the later Roman Empire, so peculiarly

¹ Finlay, "History of Greece," ii. p. 35.

instructive to read at the present day, shows that heretical churches sprang up precisely in this manner. Nestorians were Syrian nationalists; Monophysites Coptic.¹ The one was under the dominion of positivism, the other of mysticism; the national genius in each case ran in those channels. And every body of Christians which has broken off from Catholic unity has been markedly national, even the Protestant Reformation exhibiting a curiously different cast in Germany and Switzerland and England. It is a bold thing, to say no more, to maintain that the Established Church in this country has drawn out the national genius without impairing her catholicity, and that the Established Church in Scotland has distorted the national genius and lost catholicity. Church never quite faced this difficulty, and his book is much the poorer for it, because it is really the crux of the whole question. But in his essay on Bishop Andrewes he says all that fairly can be said in defence of the Reformation Settlement. Like Queen Elizabeth he was 'mere' English, the most English, perhaps, of all the Tractarians, with a strong vein of Puritan severity running through all the channels of his rich nature. He was, besides, too good an historian to minimise the great and, as he says, 'inevitable'² influence

¹ Stanley, "Eastern Church," p. 4.

² "Pascal and other Sermons," p. 74.

of the foreign reformers on the English Reformation. He recognised without flinching how nicely the idea of royal supremacy was fitted into the place in men's minds, formerly occupied by the Bishop of Rome; that the 'divine right' of the Stuarts was really the outcome of the 'divine claim' of the Vicar of Christ.¹ But—and this is his special contribution to the vexed argument—he remarks that "it cannot be sufficiently remembered that in James I.'s time, and in Charles II.'s time in 1662, the Reformation was still going on as truly as it was in the days of Edward VI. and Elizabeth."² In the replies of Andrewes to Bellarmine and Duperron he finds a sufficient vindication of that appeal to Antiquity, by which the Church of England must stand or fall. She had aimed, he said, not so much at a *via media*, but at a synthesis of religious advantages, "perhaps," as he admits, "incompatible and inconsistent ones,"³ but for that very reason plastic and flexible as was neither the system of Luther nor Calvin, nor yet of Rome. His, at least, is a standpoint from which it is possible to view with reasonable confidence the confused and sometimes conflicting acts of the men, who, without really adequate knowledge or well-defined purpose, did manage, no doubt clumsily, and with many blunders, to

¹ "Pascal and other Sermons," p. 71.

² *Ibid.*, p. 65.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

refashion a Church in England. He looked upon their work as upon the changes in some old and time-honoured castle which has been often refaced and often adapted to new uses. There was much to displease and distress him. There were seams and scars ; and beside them the modern renovations and improvements looked insolent and ugly. But, through all, the design seemed to stand out sharply and, if he had to recognise in the work the hand of many masons, he was confident also that there had been but one architect.

The main objection which lifts itself again and again, never more pertinaciously than at the present time, against this view—the most tenable one—of the Anglican claim, has been perhaps sufficiently considered in the last essay. The Church of England professes to appeal to the Primitive Church ; in fact, she appeals to the Church as it was at some period between the fifth and ninth century. Her creed is not the faith of the first disciples, “ Jesus is the Lord ”—a confession which would just now rally so many unquiet spirits to her banner—but the creed of Chalcedon and the school of Lerins. She thinks of these as the creeds of the Undivided Church, but the Undivided Church had been divided again and again before they were fully framed by Arians, Nestorians, Eutychians, and

as many more. Between Nicea and Trent where is there any gulf fixed?

Church never explained very clearly why he did not follow Newman over to Rome, but the reasons are not far to seek. It is obvious to remark that he was more of a mystic, less of a rationalist, than his master. Then, although he said he was a conservative by 'instinct and feeling,'¹ he was a liberal² by conviction, and between Liberalism and Protestantism, Conservatism and Catholicism, there is a correspondence which can seldom be long suppressed. When Newman went over there was no effective Catholicism in the English Church; a Whig theology had been dominant since the Bangorian controversy. To think of Church, indeed, as a party politician would be absurd enough. He was a historian, and for such a one politics—true policy—appears always as a slowly moving, irresistible river, as impatient of sudden currents as of stagnant pools. But he believed—that was the great point—in free discussion; he believed that the truths of religion, as 'the analogy of things' suggested,³ were reached like the truths of science or government through mistakes; he felt, as he says, that "a future of which infallibility is the only hope and safeguard," was "a prospect of the deepest gloom."⁴

¹ G. W. E. Russell, "Pocketful of Sixpences," p. 143.

² *Cp.* "Life and Letters," p. 304.

³ "Occasional Papers," ii. p. 393.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Ecclesiastical history is in the main a history of the repression of freedom of thought. Christianity, as it was delivered authoritatively, was maintained by authority. The Church of England has placed it before the bar of public opinion; with what results the next fifty years will show. No experiment more audacious, more unprecedented, has, perhaps, ever been tried. Church himself was alarmed at the results.¹ He felt keenly the charge of hypocrisy which must attach to any moral society which allows its priests without disgrace to confess one belief before God and another before men.² But it is not a little in favour of the experiment that such a man as he should have countenanced it.

The Church of England, as he conceived her, would rest her authority wholly on consent, and rule by love. Generous and patient to the last degree, she would appeal to the loyalty and honour of her ministers to think and act, as they had promised, after the manner of gentlemen. The enthusiasm of Christian ideas,³ rather than courts of law, or any invocation of the ban of the Church such as Newman has desired, would determine the vagaries of latitudinarians and ritualists. The mind of the Church and the will of the Churchman would come to move naturally in perfect accord. The compulsion of holiness would be everywhere experienced.

¹ "Life and Letters," p. 228.

² *Ibid.*, p. 324.

³ *Ibid.*

With his keen sense of artistic proportion he may have felt that by a happy chance the Church of England had hit the exact right point between licence and coercion, and that just as men learn after much striving to forsake extremes in art or literature—Æschylus for Sophocles, Botticelli for Raphael, Wagner for Beethoven—so at last they may come to find in her the quiet place where the quarrelsome principles of authority and individual freedom are somehow laid to rest. He would certainly have been in perfect agreement with that best of all defences of the Church of England at the close of "John Inglesant," which one may be forgiven for citing.

"This is the supreme quarrel of all," said Mr Inglesant. "This is not a dispute between sects and kingdoms; it is a conflict within a man's own nature—nay, between the noblest parts of a man's nature arrayed against each other. On the one side obedience and faith, on the other freedom and the reason. What can come of such a conflict as this but throes and agony? . . . The Church of Rome . . . has traded upon the highest instincts of humanity, upon its faith and love, its passionate remorse, its self-abnegation and denial, its imagination and yearning after the unseen. It has based its system upon the profoundest truths, and upon this platform it has raised a power which has, whether foreseen by its authors or not, played the part of human tyranny, greed, and cruelty. . . . You will do wrong—mankind will do wrong—if it allows to drop out of existence, merely because

the position on which it stands seems to be illogical, an agency by which the devotional instincts of human nature are enabled to exist side by side with the rational. The English Church, as established by the law of England, offers the supernatural to all who choose to come."

As the essay on Andrewes contains Church's deep thoughts on the Anglican communion, so the essay on Butler contains those deeper ones on the basis of all religion. Butler is, of course, by virtue of his moderation, patience, agnosticism,¹ and love of understating his own case, the most English of theologians. The certitude for which Newman craved, he was content to be without. He was no prophet or seer; his imagination never anticipated the rational process; but where reason led him vision followed. As Church himself puts it,

"It was his power, the greatest power perhaps that he had, that what his reason told him was certain and true he was able continually to see and feel, and imagine to be true and real. He had the power of faith."²

This was true also of the pupil on whom at the distance of a century his mantle had fallen. Church not Newman, was his spiritual child, the perfect fruit of a slow and laborious ripening. The great argument of the "Analogy"—con-

¹ I am using the word in its natural, not its acquired, sense.

² "Pascal and other Sermons," p. 35.

clusive against all who believe in a spiritual principle of good in the universe, but conclusive only against them — that the difficulties and seeming imperfections of revealed religion are no greater than those of natural morality, are in fact what we ought to expect from a fair and impartial consideration of the constitution of the world, had sunk very deep into his mind.

"Pitt," he remarks, "is reported to have said of the 'Analogy,' that it was a book which opened as many questions and raised as many doubts as it solved. Of course it does. No one can expect to sound the 'great deeps' of God's judgments, the mysteries of His Being and Government, without meeting difficulties which defy human understanding. This would be true of any discussion going deeply and sincerely into a subject in which our only possible knowledge can be but 'in part,' seeing 'through a glass darkly.' But Butler's object is not to remove all doubts and difficulties, which, in such a matter as religion, with light and faculties like ours, is obviously impossible, but to put doubts and difficulties in their proper place and proportion to what we do see and know in a practical scheme of life and truth, and in a practical choice between God and the rejection of Him."¹

"I do not think," he says elsewhere, speaking of what, rightly or wrongly, is called the conflict between religion and science, "that the majority of those who follow this tremendous debate

¹ "Pascal and other Sermons," p. 32.

reflect, or in any degree realise, what is involved in victory or defeat. It is not victory or defeat for a mere philosophical theory or criticism. . . . If the opponents of Christianity are right, if the victory lies with them, it is much more than that Christians are mistaken as men have been mistaken about science, about principles of government, about the policy or economy of a State. It means that now as regards religion, as widely as men are living and acting, all that is now is false, rotten, wrong. Our present hopes are utterly extinguished. Our present motives are as unsubstantial as bubbles. We are living in a dream. We are wasting on an idol the best love, the highest affections, the purest tenderness which can dwell in human breasts."¹

"Reason," he adds in a sentence which might have come straight from Butler, "is wide, and manifold, and waits its time, and argument is partial, one-sided, and often then most effective, when least embarrassed, by seeing too much."²

He looked to Butler, not only as a master in theology, but also as a master in the truest principle of style. It is at the first glance astonishing to find this writer of rich and exquisitely-turned sentences warning us not to despise the cumbrous diction of the "Analogy."

"A qualm," he says, "comes over the ordinary writer as he reads Butler, when he thinks how often heat and prejudice, or lazy fear of trouble, or the supposed necessities of a cause or conscious incapacity for thinking out a difficult subject

¹ "Human Life and its Conditions," p. 76.

² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

thoroughly, have led him to say something different from what he felt authorised to say by his own clear perceptions, to veil his deficiencies by fine words, by slurring over or exaggerations."¹

Butler, at whatever cost, at whatever loss of effect and brilliancy, was real. But in Church's own writing there is the happiest combination of sensibility with sincerity. He was not afraid of passion, but his enthusiasm was never ill-regulated. His diction is very pure and careful, but the language never overpowers the thought. He says much that is difficult to say ; but as he draws nearer to the sublime, his tread grows the more sure. If, as he tells us somewhere, there are two great styles — the self-conscious and the unconscious, or, in other words, the style of Gibbon and Macaulay, and the style of Swift and Pascal and Newman, there can be no doubt to which school he himself belongs. His debt to Newman is, indeed, very apparent. Some of the "Village Sermons" might have been preached in St Mary's. And it is only natural that one, whose being had no separate compartments, who was the same man as author that he was as father or citizen or priest, should have carried his discipleship into his literary work. Among his University Sermons on "Human Life and its Conditions" there are some² whose restrained beauty and

¹ "Pascal and other Sermons," p. 30.

² "Responsibility for our Belief" ; "Sin and Judgment" ; "The Call of God."

mystic intensity are not surpassed by anything that Newman ever wrote.

Of his other work it is only possible to say a word. Although a fine classical scholar, he was at heart a thorough romantic, and his writings very seldom dealt with the world as it was before the Christian era. The great masterpieces of his criticism are the essay on Dante, familiar to every student of that prince of romantics, and a review of Browning's "Sordello," very appreciative and discriminating. His judgment on Montaigne, also, is very characteristic:—

"Montaigne's practical lesson, is, that man was not made for truth, and does not want it; that he may go through life very well without truth, and without the pains of looking for it; that if he is fool enough to be anxious and in earnest about it he will but bring himself into endless difficulties merely at the end to lose his labour; but that he will find it a pleasant and healthful exercise to turn his inquiries after it into an amusing toy, to be taken up and laid down as a change from his other pleasures."¹

It is time to look at Church in another aspect—as a statesman. Here, of course, capacity has mostly to stand for performance. If he lacked that keen interest in detail, which is indispensable in a man of affairs, if he was too good a man to be a good diplomatist, at least he possessed all the qualities which are required of one who

¹ "Miscellaneous Essays," p. 76.

has to make wide and far-reaching decisions. Best of all he had patience, the virtue which Pitt marked down as the most essential for a statesman,¹ and which is surely yet more essential for a Churchman since the absence of it has been the parent of all schisms and heresies since Christianity began. There is a striking passage in which he contrasts the fortunes of Lamennais and Lacordaire to show how great a part 'temper' (as he calls it) plays in human affairs.² But long before he commended it he had made it his possession. In the crisis of 1845 he showed a perfect independence of mind. Exceptionally intimate as had been his friendship with Newman, exceptionally faithful as had been his discipleship, he never wavered for a moment in his fidelity to the Church of England.³ And in the years which followed 1845, when the Tractarian party seemed no more than a divided remnant, it was he who, together with Mozley and Bernard, Haddan and Rogers, established the *Guardian* newspaper, which it is not too much to say has made the Church of England what it is. This was a great stroke of policy, in which he played a great part. Twenty-five years later,⁴ when he was called to the Deanery of St Paul's, he played an even greater one. In the gradual restoration, material and moral,

¹ Lord Rosebery, "Pitt."

² "Cathedral and University Sermons," pp. 199, 200.

³ "Life and Letters," p. 59.

⁴ 1871.

of St Paul's to its proper place as the spiritual centre of the metropolis of the world his reign was the decisive, critical juncture. Beside Gregory, Liddon, and Lightfoot, he was no cipher. On every point of taste and order they referred to him and deferred to his judgment.¹ If theirs were the hand and tongue and brain of that organic confederacy, his was the heart.

His name ranked high as scholar, and ought to have ranked higher as statesman. No one ever thought of him as less than a saint. Sanctity and piety have for many of us an ugly sound; but Church was quite free from that sickness which the Italian painters have done so much to associate with the devout mind. Manliness in thought and conduct is a virtue which he is at no little pains to enforce, and there is a passage where he notes the absence of it as the radical defect in Fénelon's otherwise beautiful character.² He had about him, indeed, something of that austerity of disposition which is part of the absolutely necessary equipment of every student of Dante. He noticed as a thing to be wondered at that men should be able to read the New Testament and not perceive that it was a very severe book as well as a very hopeful one.³ Nothing, he said, in the whole gospel, was more plain and certain than that the

¹ "Life and Letters," p. 221.

² "Cathedral and University Sermons," p. 212.

³ "Human Life and its Conditions," p. 102.

punishment of unforgiven sin would be 'something infinitely more awful than we had faculties to conceive of.'¹ He was amazed at the short views which Christians were content to take of life. To him, at least, belief or disbelief in eternity was not an interesting opinion, but the dominant factor in life. He had a high regard for all who, after a patient and conscientious examination, had rejected what he held to be the truth, but he was intolerant of those others who through indifference or indolence had failed to consider the supreme question, of those who by their insolent neglect provoked the biting sarcasm of Pascal and the proud disdain of Butler. He could recognise the merits of Greg² and Huxley,³ and really appreciate, as Pusey could not, the work of Seeley:⁴ for the shallow self-complacency of Renan he felt an ill-disguised contempt.⁵ It was impossible for a man of his rare and finished culture not to resent the execrable taste which was content to treat of the deepest and most momentous issues of life in a spirit of sensuous trifling.

He was what he was because his religion with all its claims and all its promises was so real to him. All his life he was engaged in that mortal conflict, which he had learned from Newman to

¹ "Human Life and its Conditions," p. 115.

² "Life and Letters," p. 263.

³ "Cathedral and University Sermons," p. 13.

⁴ "Occasional Papers," ii. pp. 133-179. ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 199, 212.

consider as the proper business of life. The crisis occurred, the die was cast for him, as for so many other of his contemporaries, during one of those imperishable sermons at St Mary's.

"In a memorable sermon," he tells us, "the vivid impression of which still haunts the recollection of some who heard it, Newman gave warning to his friends and to those whom his influence touched, that no child's play lay before them; that they were making without knowing it the 'Ventures of Faith.'"¹

Again, in his method of preaching the Gospel, Church was typically a Tractarian. He knew well enough how unpersuasive and how little cogent what are called robust views of religion always appear to minds deeply reflective and cultured. He possessed that marvellous quality of reserve, which sets so wide a gulf between the manner of Christ and the manner of St Paul. As he says of Newman, so of himself, it is true that "he did not try to draw men to him. He was no proselytiser; he shrank with fear and repugnance from the character—it was an invasion of the privileges of the heart,"² There was in both of them a sense of the littleness of man's knowledge and the grandeur of his destiny which enabled them to combine the loyal confidence of the childlike mind with the force and determination of men. The word *awful*, restored for

¹ "Oxford Movement," p. 185.

² *Ibid.*, p. 184.

once to its proper meaning, was constantly on their lips,¹ and it was, as it seemed to those who watched him, 'under the shadow of a great awe'² that Church passed through the last weeks of his life here.

We know a man well if we can at all share his impressions and ideas, and it is worth while in concluding to collect a few of those of which Church has left us a record. One of them is that excited by the contemplation of great crowds. He cannot look upon many faces without wondering what personality each carried with it, without wishing to individualise these lives, to learn their history, their good and evil, their possibilities and limitations. He ponders over the question, why "of all the countless faces which he meets as he walks down the Strand, the enormous majority are failures—deflections from the type of beauty possible to them."³ He feels the "relation of the sexes; the passion of love," to be as much "the crux of our condition" as pain itself—"strange, extravagant, irrationally powerful . . . at the root of the best things of life, and the worst": facts and phenomena, he adds, patent to all, yet which it seems impossible to imagine that any one will really get beyond. Some make for belief, some for unbelief; for belief in a God of

¹ Bremond, "The Mystery of Newman," p. 197, notices this of Newman.

² "Life and Letters," p. 348.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

love and goodness, or for denial of Him. Either attitude is reasonable. Phenomena come crowding in upon the mind to satisfy any and every hypothesis. Religion offers no solution of the problem, but only a side of the conflict. "Our Lord came among us, not to clear up perplexity, but to show us which side to take."¹

He is never tired of exalting the glories of the Psalms; their wonderful thoughts of God and the soul and the purpose of man's life, worthier and wider than the highest modern culture can often understand, so that to pass to them from many a famous book of modern speculation is "like passing into the presence of the mountains and the waters and the midnight stars from the brilliant conversation of a great capital."² In Bishop Andrewes' devotions he found the secret of Bishop Andrewes' influence.³ He notices, surely with the eye of one who habitually uses them, how comprehensive, concise, tender, solemn they are; how 'the full order of prayer and all its parts' is contained in them—the introductory contemplation, the confession, the profession of faith, the intercession, the praise and thanksgiving, "the consciousness," as he says, "of individual singleness and wide corporate relations."⁴

¹ "Life and Letters," p. 276.

² "The Gifts of Civilisation," p. 94.

³ "Pascal," p. 86.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

Towards the end of his life he has a waking vision constantly present in his mind :—

“ up one road the image of a man decked and adorned as if for a triumph, carried up by rejoicing and exulting friends who praise his goodness and achievements, and, on the other road, turned back to back to it, there is the very man himself, in sordid and squalid apparel, surrounded not by friends but by ministers of justice, and going on, while his friends are exulting to his certain and perhaps awful judgment.”¹

He would have us humble ourselves by reflecting what a hundred years more or less in the world's history, or a change of climate or language, would have made of us individually.² He is haunted by the mystery of all he feels and sees—of his own being and its growth from childhood to old age, from time into eternity ; of the natural world “so incomprehensible,” he writes, borrowing Butler's words to express his thought, “that a man must, in the literal sense, know nothing at all who is not sensible of his ignorance of it.”³

“It was the saying,” he remarks, “of an old Greek in the very dawn of thought, that men would meet with many surprises when they were dead. Perhaps one will be the recollection that

¹ “Life and Letters,” p. xxiv.

² “Human Life and its Conditions,” p. 48.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

when we were here we thought the ways of Almighty God so easy to argue about.”¹

So that one may think more wisely than one can talk.

Then what a strange comment is this upon Rome :—

“I had the feeling that it is the one city in the world, besides Jerusalem, on which we know God’s eye is fixed, and that he has some purpose or other about it—one can hardly tell whether good or evil.”²

And the words from the *Dies Iræ*, which he caused to be inscribed on his tomb at Whatley :—

“Rex tremendæ majestatis
Qui salvas salvandos gratis
Salva me, fons pietatis,

“Quærens me sedisti lassus ;
Redemisti crucem passus.
Tantus labor non sit cassus,”

come to us from the wild hills of Assisi with a breath that is not of to-day or yesterday, and lift him into the company of good men, who in all ages and in all countries have proved the truth of St Augustine’s words :—“Fecisti nos ad Te, Domine, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te.”

Who can measure the value of such a life as this, until the long issue of events is disclosed, and the deep under-currents are revealed and the things of time are seen in the light of eternity?

¹ “Life and Letters,” p. 338.

² *Ibid.*, p. 296.

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Church's historical works are quoted from the Eversley edition. The "Life and Letters of Dean Church" used is the 1895 reprint of the first edition.

The authoritative biography of Church is by Miss Mary Church—"Life and Letters of Dean Church."

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No one, so far as the present writer is aware, has ever made an attack on Church.

J. A. FROUDE

1818-1894

Froude's place as a historian—Froude and Tacitus—His early life—The "Nemesis of Faith"—The outlook for Catholicism : Newman—The outlook for Protestantism : Carlyle—Bunsen and Modernism—Froude's "History of England"—Froude's peculiar qualifications for writing it—Froude and Lecky as types of historical method—Froude's alleged mistakes—"A Siding at a Railway Station"—Froude and Freeman—The "Erasmus"—Froude's Handicap—The great characters of his History : Henry, Anne, More, Cranmer, Latimer, Cromwell — The Monasteries — The English Bible — The English Liturgy—The Articles—Cranmer's death the triumph of the English Reformers—The Elizabethan settlement—The Spanish Armada—The conclusion—Carlyle's Gospel—Life of Carlyle—Froude's divided allegiance ; Christ and Cæsar—"The English in Ireland"—Froude in South Africa—"Oceana"—"The Bow of Ulysses"—Tariffs—Froude's conception of History—"Cæsar" and "Lord Beaconsfield"—Froude's style—His personality and appearance—The "Short Studies"—"The Cat's Pilgrimage"—Froude's opinions—Literary men—The Oxford Professorship—The end.

"One seem'd all dark and red—a tract of sand,
And some one pacing there alone,
Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
Lit with a low large, moon."

—TENNYSON, *The Palace of Art*.

THE great historians of the ancient world had one advantage which their successors have not continued to enjoy. Their narrative and selection of events passed for the most part uncriticised

and uncontradicted in their own age, and lapse of time has rendered criticism and contradiction ineffectual, if not impossible. We may disbelieve their miracles and challenge their conclusions, but there will be no Spartan story of the Peloponnesian War, nor will Tiberius and Nero escape from the clutches of Tacitus. It is a great thing to have had the field to yourself.

If he had lived in an age less competitive than his own, Froude would have been held one of the first masters of his art. In narrative power, style, charm, interest, pathos, insight, he is the equal of any one that can be named. His critics pretty nearly admit as much. But they add that he misread his authorities, and misstated his facts. This may or may not be. The uncertain breeze of public opinion is veering round once more in his favour, and some day we may hope to have an edition of his works, like Professor Bury's edition of Gibbon, which will put the whole matter beyond dispute. But those who keep the old books in repair perform one of the most unselfish and most thankless tasks known to mankind. So that we may have to wait.

The present essay has no pretence to carry the vexed dispute between Froude and his critics a stage further towards decision. Rather, it aims at displaying his work, as that of Tacitus may be displayed, in the light of a magnificent

pamphlet bearing upon the politics, ecclesiastical and civil, of his own time. His history was very much more than this, but it was intended to be at least so much.¹ As Tacitus is supposed to have condemned the government of Domitian through the history of Tiberius, so Froude disputed and opposed the ideas of the Oxford Movement through the history of the Reformation. Latter-day students of history hardly remember that there is a right and wrong in human affairs. Froude never forgot it, and, rightly or wrongly, staked the whole sum of his wonderful talents on the justice of the Protestant Revolution.

He was born in 1818. An unhappy motherless boyhood, aggravated by rough usage, which after the fashion of those days was regarded as judicious hardening; three years of mismanagement at Westminster School; a reckless undergraduate career at Oxford, lived like a sort of gamble in daily expectation of being overtaken by the fatal family disease which had carried off his brother Hurrell; an Exeter fellowship with its concomitant deacon's orders; theological investigation and religious revolt, ending in the abandonment of creed and profession, and means of livelihood—and with these his stormy youth was at an end. The story of his mental difficulties was set out in a little book called the "Nemesis of Faith." Carlyle read it, disapproved, and

¹ Preface of 1870 to his "History of England."

told him coldly some years later that a man should consume his own smoke.¹ Froude's life was full of smoke, but he never let it blow in the face of the public again, and his later writings show us only the glowing embers of his griefs. The book itself was no doubt a mistake, but its thesis—that without religion morality will waste away—was never recanted, and runs like a silver stream through all the varied products of his genius. And—for those who care to touch sacred things with common hands—the "Nemesis" contains the spectacle of a soul in unbearable doubt.

"The most perilous crisis of our lives," says the hero, who is not a hero, "is when we first realise that two men may be as sincere, as earnest, as faithful, as uncompromising, and yet hold opinions as far asunder as the poles."²

This was exactly the point. Froude was by nature a disciple. He had dwelt first in the tents of Newman and of Newman's masterful lieutenant, his own brother, Hurrell. But his shelter was carried bodily away when Newman told him that we could not properly pronounce on the miracle in the Valley of Ajalon, until we understood the metaphysics of motion.³ Meanwhile, he had travelled in Ireland and stayed with an Evangelical clergymen, whom he found

¹ Froude, "Carlyle's Life in London," i. p. 458.

² "Nemesis of Faith," p. 156.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

not one whit the worse Christian or worse gentleman because he abhorred Tractarian tenets. Then he had begun to read Carlyle. That profound, mournful, dissatisfied spirit laid on his sensitive frame an even stronger spell than the delicate, austere soul of Newman. He felt, like his hero, "obliged to look for himself at what men said, instead of simply accepting all because they said it." The question of miracles, as with Gibbon and Newman, proved to be the weight that turned the balance. He had been asked by the Tractarian leader to contribute a biography of St Neot to the *Lives of the Saints*, and the material dissolved as he studied it into fairy tales. St Patrick went the same way, crumbling into nothingness under the vigour of his criticism.¹ After this the end was sure.

Public indignation at the "Nemesis" drove him from Oxford. There was a time of great distress. Then he married and settled down, mind and work at last determined. His religious opinions never underwent any further changes. Carlyle had taught him that the test of all religious belief or unbelief was vitality. Atheism did not seem to him to pass it. He never felt, he says, any kind of inclination² towards what was after all only nature-worship dressed up in the formulæ of science.³ At the bar of history

¹ Paul, "Life of Froude," p. 34.

² Unpublished Fragment.

³ "Short Studies," ii. pp. 21, 22 (Calvinism).

in the last days of the Pagan Empire, it had been tried and found wanting. Christianity was the answer of the human mind to its theories. Catholicism fared but little better. It was beautiful, but it was dead. To all things there is a time, and its time had gone by. With real, if incomplete, understanding he wrote its epitaph. The passage is the most musical in all his writings, and we may as well pause to hear it. He is speaking of the Elizabethan Renaissance.

“For, indeed, a change was coming upon the world, the meaning and direction of which even still is hidden from us, a change from era to era. The paths trodden by the footsteps of ages were broken up; old things were passing away, and the faith and the life of ten centuries were dissolving like a dream. Chivalry was dying; the abbey and the castle were soon together to crumble into ruins; and all the forms, desires, beliefs, convictions of the old world were passing away, never to return. A new continent had risen up beyond the Western sea. The floor of heaven, inlaid with stars, had sunk back into an infinite abyss of immeasurable space; and the firm earth itself, unfixed from its foundations, was seen to be but a small atom in the awful vastness of the universe. In the fabric of habit, in which they had so laboriously built for themselves, mankind were to remain no longer.

“And now it is all gone—like an unsubstantial pageant faded; and between us and the old English there lies a gulf of mystery which the prose of the historian will never adequately bridge. They cannot come to us, and our

imagination can but feebly penetrate to them. Only among the aisles of the cathedral, only as we gaze upon their silent figures sleeping on their tombs, some faint conceptions float before us of what these men were when they were alive ; and perhaps in the sound of church bells, that peculiar creation of mediæval age which falls upon the ear like the echo of a vanished world."¹

Catholicism, as he understood it, was dead—Christianity was alive. The progressive nations were Protestant, and the stern religion which they professed appeared to him a truer criticism of life than what had gone before it, or than any philosophy that was likely to come after it.² The world was a hard place, devised for the formation of character. And men were the children of the world, elect or reprobate by force of circumstances over which they had no manner of control ; so at least it had seemed to one of the finest breeds of men that had ever lived, and he was content to believe substantially what they had believed. For the changes that Time had worked in their creed did not seem really significant. Religion, anyway, was necessary. The point of the "Nemesis" had been that infidelity led to immorality. The law in its wisdom had established a Church to do that

¹ "History of England," ch. i.

² Unpublished Fragment. *Cp.* Froude's Article "A Few Words on Mr Freeman" (*Nineteenth Century*, April 1879) : "I found myself unfitted for a clergyman's position, and I abandoned it. I did not leave the Church. I withdrew into the position of a lay-member in which I have ever since remained."

which itself could not do, and make men clean and brave and truthful.

"Religion," as he had learnt it in his father's Devonshire parsonage at Dartington, "meant, essentially," he says, "doing our duty. It was not to be itself an object of thought, but a guide to action. Life was a journey in which there were many temptations and many pitfalls. Religion was the lanthorn by which we could see our way on the dark road. Let the light be thrown on the road and you will see your way. Keep your eyes fixed on the light itself and you will fall into the ditch. The Christianity of my childhood was the light to our feet and the lamp of our ways, perhaps the ideal conception of what religion ought to be."¹

So also thought the man whom he considered the noblest and truest he ever came across.² With Carlyle he felt that the age had outgrown the formularies of the sixteenth century; that as the word of God had once been used to sweep away a whole body of traditions which had made it of none effect, so the time had come when the religious consciousness ought to assert itself against clean-cut formularies no longer agreeable to the advance of thought. The Reformers had no proper ground of complaint if they too were reformed, and obsolete definitions and subscriptions swept away. He had the same horror of verbal untruthfulness that characterised Carlyle, but, as a God-fearing Englishman, he attended Church,

¹ Unpublished Fragment.

² "Oceana."

and found in the Reformation liturgy, grown old in the service of his country, an adequate expression of his own thoughts about that other world which was never long absent from his mind. Some of his last words, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" were probably the exact measure of his belief. His faith was always an interrogation, which he persistently answered in the affirmative. Conscience alone he held for certain.¹

At times, indeed, he was curiously near the view, to which he had listened, not unamused, when Bunsen had propounded it to him soon after he had thrown off his orders. The scholar-diplomatist gave him a demonstration of Christianity, which lasted five hours, and concluded by saying:—

"That is Christianity—that is everlastingly true. Nothing can touch that. As to the facts, we know nothing about them, nor does it matter whether they can be proved or not. Spiritual truth is not dependent on history."²

This was Modernism, as we have come to call it, pure and simple, and Froude never accepted it as the equivalent of honest, objective faith. Yet in his tentative way he makes it plausible and recalls the remark of Alcinous when Odysseus is excusing the strangeness of his traveller's tales—"Σοὶ δ'ἔπι μὲν μορφὴ ἑπέων,"³ "Beauty crowns thy words"—to show that anything that can

¹ Paul, "Life of Froude," p. 431.

² Unpublished Fragment.

³ *Odyssey*, xi. l. 367.

assume form is true, has at least a sort of truth ;¹ of which precious virtue there were, indeed, so many kinds—mathematical, scientific,² historical,³ legendary, moral.⁴ Was Cæsar a jot more real, he asks, because for a few years he was subject to the conditions of time and matter?⁵—more real than Hamlet or any other of those starry creations that shine above the firmament of human suffering and failure? And if not, was there anything to prevent our transferring the principle, to Scripture history? Yet the thought, after all, was itself a shadow, “too good to be true.”⁶

“Shadows we are and shadows we pursue!” says Burke in the famous apophthegm. Froude went down among the shades and brought them back alive. People had pretty nearly forgotten the Reformers, when Newman began to write, as they had forgotten the saints who went before them. Clarendon was every man’s reading and many men’s limit. The excellence of the Reformation had been supposed unassailable. Froude made himself the proprietor of a great tract of English history, and of that possession no man may rob him. Historians may dispute his title-deeds, harry his land, and remove his land-marks, but as long as men are men, agitated by human passion and ennobled by human achievement, so long will they prefer to hear

¹ “Oceana,” p. 69.

² *I.e.*, experimentally proved.

³ *I.e.*, asserted only.

⁴ Unpublished Fragment.

⁵ “Oceana,” p. 27.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

the story of the Tudor epoch from his voice. "Full of admirable research and political insight, the four volumes devoted to the reign of Henry VIII. are still the best general picture of the times," says the latest historian of that period.¹

"Only the man or woman," said Skelton, "who has had to work upon the mass of Scottish material in the Record Office can properly appreciate Mr Froude's inexhaustible industry and substantial accuracy. His point of view is very different from mine, but I am bound to say that his acquaintance with the intricacies of Scottish politics, during the reign of Mary, appears to me almost, if not quite, unrivalled."²

The twelve volumes of the History of England are, and must remain, the best pictures, if not of the completed Reformation, at least of the English Reformers, because no one will ever, in all probability, be able to enter again quite so heartily into their temper. A peculiar combination of experience and temperament not likely to recur gives Froude the advantage here. He was, in the first place, himself a Protestant revolutionary. He had listened with the questioning admiration of a younger brother to the fiercest, most uncompromising, most brilliant spirit of the Oxford Counter-Reformation. He had been himself almost a Tractarian, thinking

¹ Fisher, "Political History of England," p. 495. Mr Fisher to some extent modifies his praise in his following remarks.

² Skelton, "Maitland of Lethington," i. p. xxxv.

there was no other sensible theology, and deeply impressed by the holiness of Newman. Then he had, as he thought, recovered his balance and become what he ever after remained—a free-thinking Protestant. Whether he formed a right estimate of the Oxford Movement is not the point. Of the two pioneers who had influenced him, one became the greatest Roman Catholic apologist of modern times, and his own brother, Hurrell, had he lived, would almost certainly have professed the Roman faith. Anthony Froude grew to dislike Rome with all the vigorous prejudice of an Elizabethan sailor, and set out to satisfy himself that after all the Reformation was no mistake.¹ Upon an age, which was in fact far more occupied with morality than theology, he brought to bear a mind, at times heedless of suffering, but passionately hostile to corruption, cowardice, and treachery, and as glad of every manly virtue—of dash, adventure, courage—as one that finds great spoils. Many Catholics died well, but in forcible characters the Reformers had it. There are none to set against Luther, Latimer, Knox.

This was not all. Henry VIII. is considered—not, it seems, altogether rightly—the founder of the British Navy, and under Drake and Hawkins that navy became a force in Europe. Froude was a Devonian, too romantic and too

¹ Preface of 1870 to the "History of England."

sad not to be as much the slave of the sea as Michelet, and proud as any West-countryman of the exploits of the English seamen of the sixteenth century. Then, again, he found among the Tudor statesmen all the glow and colour, which were a necessity of his nature. The Reformation was in fact the supreme emotion of the western world. All the high features of human character, which Machiavelli, a little before, had supposed to be non-existent, had risen at once to the surface, together with such a mass of intrigue, cruelty, and double-dealing as should feed historical novels to the end of the world. Romance meets us at every turn, and Froude, like all the Oriel School, was keenly romantic. The sixteenth century besides offered the circumstances most favourable to illustrate the theory of great men, in which Carlyle had led him to believe. The assumption underlying that theory is that great men understand the people's real needs, as the people never do themselves. Carlyle had thought this true of Oliver. He had found the Long Parliament ineffective and impotent; the Lieutenant-General full of insight. If the Reformation was good it is certain that Henry was actively expressing, as the people could never have been disinterested enough to express it, that transcendental conception of 'the general will' as distinct from 'the will of all,' which Rousseau taught¹ and which Green

¹ "Contrat Social," ii. ch. 3.

supposed to be 'the permanently valuable thing in his teaching.'¹ Henry and his daughter carried the thing through "backed by the strongest, bravest, and best of their subjects. To the last, to the defeat of the Armada, manhood suffrage in England would have brought back the Pope."² Lastly, perhaps from the singular but fortunate irony which makes us most admire just those virtues in which we least excel, Froude had a vehement admiration for practical sagacity and, if there be an English statesman who has possessed a double measure of that quality, it is Burleigh.

These were the affections which linked him to the sixteenth century, and enabled him to tell its story with all the fervour of passionate interest. Impartiality in the sense in which we attribute it to Lecky and Gardiner, it is unreasonable to look for. One man can give us "limpid rationalism," a dispassionate review of the folly of the past in the light of the wisdom of the present; another man can kindle into flame the embers of bygone controversies, and make us declare for Cæsar or the Reformation or Elizabeth, so that, as we read, time drops away, and the past becomes as the present, and we realise our partnership in the ages that are gone. The man who could accomplish both would be the perfect historian; only he might chance to turn out a god in disguise.

¹ T. H. Green, "Lectures on Political Obligation," p. 90.

² Unpublished Fragment.

We may carry farther the contrast between the two modes of work. Lecky behaves like a judge who trusts his jury. He gives them the material for forming a judgment either way, then recommends one view to their notice, and leaves them to themselves. Froude always means to manage his jury. He has looked into the case, drawn his conclusions, and in his summing-up commonly fails to give any adequate presentation of the facts that tell against his own view, if indeed he fully states them. The jury is not required to make any effort, but merely to convert the opinion of the judge into a verdict. As good a defence might, perhaps, be made out for writing history this way as the other, because impartiality is the mortal foe of vigour and proceeds, besides, on the gratuitous assumption of an advance in the quality of human judgment. We think war bad and intolerance and kingly government, and mete out justice accordingly. But the men of the sixteenth century did not think so. War, they argued, made for manliness, and religious conformity for national unity, and the government of kings for wise counsels; and there is nothing proven to show they were wrong. Froude commonly took the standpoint of the men he judged the best of their time, and saw with their eyes.

He was accused, not only of partiality, but of inaccuracy. What he had to say about this may

be seen in the restrained but sufficient defence of his work, which he published in the *Nineteenth Century*, "A Few Words to Mr Freeman."¹

"I acknowledge to five real mistakes in the whole book," he wrote to Skelton, "and that is all that the utmost malignity has discovered."²

In a brilliant piece of satirical and only half-serious allegory — "A Siding at a Railway Station"³ — he supposes a number of persons representative of the society of the nineteenth century to be brought up for final judgment, not in the presence of the hosts of heaven (in whose existence indeed they few of them probably believed) but at the custom-house of a railway terminus, where baggage is opened instead of books. After a time his own turn comes round, and this is how he describes it:—

"In the way of work there was nothing to be shown but certain books and other writings, and these were spread out to be tested. A fluid was poured on the pages, the effect of which was to obliterate entirely every untrue proposition, and make every partially true proposition grow faint in proportion to the false element which entered into it. Alas! Chapter after chapter vanished away, leaving the paper clean, as if no compositor had ever laboured in setting type for it. Pale and illegible became the fine-sounding paragraphs in which I had secretly prided myself. A few passages, however, survived here and there at long intervals. They were those

¹ April, 1879.

² Skelton, "Table-Talk of Shirley," pp. 142-143.

³ "Short Studies."

on which I had laboured least and (which I) had almost forgotten, or those, as I observed in one or two instances, which had been selected for special reprobation in the weekly journals. Something stood to my credit, and the worst charge of wilfully and intentionally setting down what I did not believe to be true was not alleged against me. Ignorance, prejudice, carelessness; sins of infirmity, culpable indeed, but not culpable in the last degree; the water in the ink, the common-places, the ineffectual sentiments; these, to my unspeakable comfort, I perceived were my heaviest crimes."

Men, as Gibbon said, are the best judges of their own work. Froude has laid what blame there is where, one may suspect, it will finally lie. It was the general expressions of opinion, not the particular statements of fact, which made him so many foes, and it is likely it will be for those and not for these that sentence will finally go against him, if it goes that way at all. His quiet, vigilant, rather merciless sarcasm cost him dear. Mistakes, doubtless, he made—mistakes of omission, interpretation, inference; but whether many or few, both in themselves and relatively to the work of others has yet to be determined. Ignorant, anyhow, he was not; prejudiced, not one half so much as most people; careless, it seems, very much more in reading his proofs than in working up his material. Those who speak of him as a liar would do well to remember that every slander, and indeed every condemna-

tion, is a snowball and gathers size as it goes. Freeman was the first father of many attacks, but cuts an uncommonly poor figure now in the light of some recent revelations.¹ And Macaulay, whose historical work Freeman set so high, would have passed a discreditable examination in some of those very qualities, for the alleged absence of which Froude was so violently attacked.

A word may be said here about the "Erasmus," which is commonly regarded as one of the least accurate, as it is certainly one of the most delightful, of his writings. It has faults, a few serious, many trifling, none prejudicial to the point and purpose of the book. But it must be remembered that it was written in the last hurried years at Oxford, when health was fast failing and work more pressing than ever; that Renaissance Latin is no child's play, and the experts themselves sometimes in doubt how to translate; that the proofs were corrected on his death-bed. They are singularly ungracious that cast stones at the historian, who drew "Erasmus" out of his Latin winding-sheet, and clothed him in English of imperishable excellence.

Of the History of England there is another vindication. He had to decipher in crabbed manuscript what we can now read in clear print. Few men, it is safe to say, could have turned

¹ See Paul, "Life of Froude," the chapter on "Froude and Freeman."

what was virtually virgin soil at Froude's speed, and with greater certainty ; no one except Gibbon could have maintained throughout so high a level of expression. He got into touch with his period, as few historians have been able to do at any time, saturating himself with it until he became in his likes and dislikes something of an Elizabethan. Hatfield, so overpoweringly full of the spirit of the past, where he worked through much of his material and formed one of the great friendships of his life, cast over him, one cannot doubt, its wonderful spell. The old palace of the bishops of Ely, the Vineyard, the stretch of field and woodland past Pope's Farm to Essendon, the ground across which fell the shadows of the immemorial Oak, must all have been peopled for him with something more than the ghosts of the past. His men and women, whatever else we may say of them, are human, passionate, impressionable, real. We pass behind institutions, policies, diplomacies, economic and ecclesiastical crises, to know the actors themselves. All things are seen subjectively. Character becomes, as indeed it is, the one thing needful. He does not sketch the movement of a society, but paints the society itself. And in the ardour of his work he entirely forgets his own religious determinism and colours every moral blot, by which men and women have defiled the freedom of their will, in the angriest hues,

Of the great gallery of portraits that adorn his pages, five stand out in high relief—the masterful King, the high-hearted Archbishop striving with self and circumstance, the wayward Queen and her guileful cousin, and the sagacious Burleigh. It might almost be said that the history falls into three acts, each depending on some personal interest. There is first ‘the King’s matter’; then there is the trial and vindication of the opinions of Cranmer; then, last of all in one long, lurid, fitful blaze of plot and counter-plot is waged the battle of the two Queens, whilst Burleigh plays the rôle that Edward Waverley and Henry Morton do for Scott, and embodies Froude’s reason, though never his enthusiasm. The character that he has drawn of Henry, has, of course, excited the sharpest denial. Up to Froude’s time, Henry, in the popular estimate, had enjoyed much the same distinction as Oliver Cromwell. He was wicked, tyrannical, cruel, capricious, contemptuous of law, human or divine. Hume could only explain his popularity by supposing that the English of that age had grown like ‘Eastern slaves.’¹ Nor had the Tractarian movement helped the cause of Protestant or Puritan. Carlyle upset the legend about Oliver, and the destroyer of many Parliaments now stands outside Westminster Hall. Froude tried to do as much for Henry; yet Westminster Cathedral has

¹ Hume, “History of England,” ch. xxxiii.

risen without any monument to the Defender of the Faith. Religious sentiment runs deeper than political, so we may see the ecclesiastical despot get his reward at last as well as the civil one. Meanwhile, the historians are not encouraging, and Froude is generally discountenanced. But this is, to some extent, because about Froude himself there has grown to be a legend. It is said that he has made Henry something between a hero and a demi-god. This was not Henry's character as Froude conceived it. In the matter of what we are pleased to call the divorce—though divorce it never was nor could be¹—he does not dispute the King's personal and selfish interest. What he does say is, that it happened to coincide with that which was of grave national concern—the birth of an heir to the throne. It has been too little observed that he is not unwilling to let us apply the term 'self-deceit' to Henry's conduct.² Mr Pollard, the greatest living authority, says no worse of Henry when he points out that so far as dates go it is perfectly possible to hold that he was meditating the separation from Katherine before ever he was in love with Anne, and that in 1528, when in serious fear of the plague and daily receiving the sacrament, he

¹ It was a decree of nullity of marriage: the very point of the suit being that Henry was not able to contract a marriage with Katherine; and, if there was no marriage, there could be no divorce.

² "History of England," i. p. 123.

continued to write love - letters to the latter, without any apparent qualms of conscience, whilst with the other hand he was reproving his sister, Margaret, for her amours.¹

Our view of the transactions of which Anne was the pivot will determine our view of Henry. Froude saw this, and devoted a chapter to the trial of that Queen. Mr Fisher² selects it as an example of all that is worst in his work. Froude's argument, however, remains untouched. We have no adequate knowledge of the evidence on which Anne was condemned. If we disbelieve its sufficiency, we inculcate the greatest names in England in a foul conspiracy. Choose between Anne and Henry, as you please, but remember that with Henry falls the flower of the English nobility.

So, again, in the matter of More, Froude's defence that the crisis admitted of no half-measures is virtually endorsed by Mr Pollard, when he points out that More and Fisher would have condemned heretics for pleading the rights of conscience, just as certainly as they were themselves condemned for exercising them.³ More's death, we say, is a hideous crime. Hideous it is because More was More, but crime it was not, and More knew that as well as any one. It is, anyway, an event over which Anglican apologists are

¹ Pollard, "Henry VIII.," p. 149.

² H. Fisher, "Political History of England, 1487-1547."

³ Pollard, "Henry VIII.," p. 225.

apt to skate too lightly. The Act of Supremacy in its own view, and in fact, substituted the King for the Pope as the interpreter of Scripture.¹ The secular clergy complied and took the oath. More, if high character and wisdom are thrown together into the balance, was easily the greatest man in Europe—a rare combination of saint and lawyer. He had been Lord Chancellor; and in the matter of the succession he was ready to swear to obey the law of the land. But the royal supremacy he would not acknowledge, and because he would not acknowledge it he perished. Froude regards the event as the parting of the ways. From that day a great battle was joined, with passive resistance for arms and armour, and nationality or catholicity for a cause.² When More was asked by Audley if he wished to be considered wiser and of better conscience than all the bishops and nobles of the realm, he replied:—

“My lord, for one bishop of your opinion, I have a hundred saints of mine; and for one parliament of yours, and God knows of what kind, I have all the General Councils for a thousand years; and for one kingdom I have France and all the kingdoms of Christendom.”³

More saw further it may be than many men see to-day. Anyway, the severance with Rome

¹ Froude, “History of England,” ii. p. 346. *See note.*

² Froude, “History of England,” ii. p. 362.

³ Quoted by Fisher, “Political History of England, 1487-1547,” p. 354.

was complete, and the curtain descended over the old world of saints and relics with its background of abbey and cloister, in which More and Fisher had played their part. It was the hour of Cranmer and Cromwell.

On 9th June 1536 Latimer preached his famous sermon before convocation, assembled in Old St Paul's. Latimer was the man after Froude's own heart; one who walked warily, taking religion for a lantern and holding his eyes fixed, not on the source of light, but upon the rays that shone across the narrow roadway. He was beyond all question the greatest moral force in England in his time,¹ ready to speak his mind and pay for it with his blood. Mighty evils, he told his audience, had been swept away, yet they had had no hand in the work. God would visit them also in an hour when they thought not. The mighty evils were the lesser monasteries, lately suppressed at the recommendation of Cromwell's inquisitors. Froude accepts the reports of Legh and Layton and exhibits the religious orders as wallowing in the foulest vice. Here, as so often when great issues are at stake, History seems to wear a double face. There is the Protestant view, naturally impatient of ascetism and resting on the word of men like Colet and Latimer, resting, too, on Acts of Parliament, to which, in that epoch, Froude was

¹ And this in spite of his inexcusable conduct at the death of Friar Forest.

accustomed to defer as to the voice of the best public opinion; and, if we accept it, the Augean stables appear a paradise of cleanliness beside the monasteries. There is the Catholic view, affirming, with St Paul,¹ the exceptional grace of perfect purity; affirming with De Maistre the practical wisdom of the Church in withdrawing a large body of men from the married state;² denouncing the reckless speed and insufficient enquiry of Legh and Layton, their want of high character, greed of preferment, prejudice as seculars³ against the religious orders; pleading the inconsistency between their reports and the preamble of the Act of Dissolution in which religion in divers of the greater houses was declared to be right well kept; pleading, too, the inevitable advent of offences whether among primitivedisciples or cloistered monks or those jolly parsons of the eighteenth century, whom Froude preferred to the Oxford revivalists. History was never more ironical. A shake of the box, a shuffle of the documents that remain to us, and the dice, we feel, might fall out the other way.

Close upon the Act of Dissolution and Latimer's sermon followed the English Bible. Froude thought it a work of incomparable genius,

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 1, 7, 28, 32, 34.

² De Maistre, "De Pape," iii. section 3.

³ Legh was, almost certainly, not in orders, and can only be called a secular in the sense of a laymen. Layton was technically a secular.

and laid characteristic, but not improper, stress upon the frontispiece.¹ First, Henry, kneeling, receives the Bible from God; then Henry, enthroned, gives with each hand a copy of the precious book to Cranmer and Cromwell—the one for the spirituality, the other for the laity of the realm. The national character of the movement that was by then well on its way had been perfectly understood by Coverdale. Yet the course of the Reformation did not run smoothly either for the Vicar-General or his apologist. Cromwell fell between the King and the Lutherans; and Froude was like to fall between the King and Cromwell. He had greatly admired both; had thought them both hard but, so far as the times would allow, good. He would not throw over either; Cromwell, he said, had faithfully served the King, and one higher than the King, yet Henry had no alternative but to surrender him to his foes.² Such a defence may avail to palliate the guilt of Charles I. in giving up Strafford, when the Whitehall mob was threatening the Queen's life. It can have no force at all, urged on behalf of Henry in the fulness of his power.

Swift steel carried off Cromwell; slow disease did for Henry; Cranmer was left to steer the ship of the state in that *Via Media Anglicana*, for which the three men had been inconsequently

¹ "History of England," iii. p. 82.

² *Ibid.* p. 528.

striving. The English Liturgy, the work of the Archbishop's own hands, appeared — "the one admirable thing which the unhappy reign (of Edward VI.) produced."¹ Cranmer, like Henry, had understood the temper of his countrymen better than they understood it themselves, and, as Froude says, "services which have outlived so many storms speak for their own excellence, and speak for the merit of the workmen."² Alongside of the Liturgy came the Articles, and of them also Froude has a word to say:—

"Articles of belief they have been called; articles of teaching; articles of peace. Protestants who have restored the right of private judgment, who condemn so emphatically the articles added by the Council of Trent to the Christian creed, not for themselves only, but because human beings are not permitted to bind propositions of their own upon the consciences of believers, will scarcely pretend that they are the first. If it be unlawful for a Catholic Council to enlarge the dogmatic system of Christianity, no more can it be permitted to a local church to impose upon the judgment a series of intricate assertions on theological subtleties, which the most polemical divines will not call vital, or on questions of public and private morality where the conscience should be the only guide."³

This is, as we are beginning to know, the logical outcome of the Protestant creed. But Cranmer did not know it, nor those who worked

¹ "History of England," iii. p. 528.

² *Ibid.*, v. p. 394.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 395.

with him, Zwingli being an honourable exception.¹ They used the sword to teach truth as well as justice, and in their own condemnation they had no ground of complaint. All unconscious, they fought the battle of religious liberty, not really against the Pope but against the King; for by what Froude calls 'a cowardly sophism,'² but which is surely no sophism at all, all heretics, after being adjudged so, were handed over to the civil power for such punishment as the civil power decreed.

Anyway, Froude told the story of Cranmer's death, with a pathos and a sympathy that will never be equalled. He can hardly be wrong in his conclusion that the Archbishop's martyrdom, more than any other event, won the battle of the English Reformation.

"The worth of a man," he said, with singular felicity, and yet, as it must seem from a Roman standpoint, with singular inconsequence, "must be measured by his life, not by his failure under a single and peculiar trial. The Apostle, though forewarned, denied his Master on the first alarm of danger; yet that Master, who knew his nature in its strength and its infirmity, chose him for the rock on which He would build His Church."³

Cranmer died, but his opinions lived. It was on his foundation that Elizabeth and Cecil reared that strange shell of a church, which was afterwards to have so rich and splendid a decoration.

¹ Zwingli and Socinus were opposed to persecution. See Lecky, "Rise of the Spirit of Rationalism," ii. p. 44.

² "History of England," vi. p. 382.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 430.

The conduct of the Marian bishops left little room to doubt the finality of the cleavage. Only the disreputable Kitchen kept his place; the others with one accord went to the Tower rather than swear to the Supremacy. With difficulty Parker was consecrated by the remnant of Edward's episcopate—Scory, Coverdale, Barlow and Hodgkins. It was such a settlement as suited Elizabeth perfectly. She liked the old forms, but the substance of episcopal power she had no mind to restore. She left to her spiritual officers a show of spiritual dignity, but Dean and Chapter were, in effect, bound to choose the royal nominees. Mary had waited to burn Cranmer before she appointed Pole. Elizabeth filled her sees while the Marian bishops were still alive. "The fear of a King is as the roaring of a lion," said the wisest of the children of men, "whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul."¹ So Henry taught and Elizabeth believed.

An Anglo - Catholic history of the English Reformation would terminate, as Dean Church suggested, at the reign of Charles II. A Protestant history ends, and ends properly, with the death of Mary Stuart and the destruction of the Armada. Sixteenth-century Catholicism, as Froude conceived it, was incarnate in the Queen of Scots. She is the villain of the piece, luring men to loss of soul and body, by her

¹ Proverbs xx. 2.

winning wiles and her features falsely fair, as surely as that fanciful contemporary portrait of her—the false Duessa in the *Faerie Queene*. And just as Spenser gloats with an indecent malignity over Duessa's fall, when stripped of all her artifices, old, foul and deformed, she is driven from Orgoglio's castle,¹ Froude, making history into parable, dwells all too faithfully on the last scene at Fotheringhay, where Mary, still a graceful and majestic figure robed in black satin, with a golden crucifix about her neck and one of ivory in her hand, is converted, even as she repeats the Latin prayers of her church, into a wizened old woman, clad by her own care in a scarlet gown. And if the hollowness of the Catholic persuasion was depicted in the downfall of the Queen of Scots, all the vigour and vitality of the Reformation were made apparent in the life of the Elizabethan circle—in seamen like Drake and Hawkins and Frobisher, in statesmen like Burghley and Walsingham, in courtiers like Sidney and Spenser. Its superstitions, he thought, were not craven, its austerities not oppressive. It was the education of men who beat the greatest King of their age, began to build a maritime Empire, the like of which has never been seen, and reared a race as adventurous as the world can show. If, as Froude believed, right in modern societies tends to be might,²

¹ *Faerie Queene*, bk. i., canto. viii. 46-50.

² 'The English in Ireland,' i. p. 2.

then it may be that the principles of the English Reformation are as near the truth as in this illusive world we may hope to come.

The drama, played out to its fifth act, ends magnificently. From the Bay of Ferrol, with the sun gilding the summit of the Galician mountains and the wind scarcely stirring the summer sea, the huge Armada, its sails marked with the blood-red emblem of the Crusades, floats to its undreamed-of doom—Catholic Spain advancing to the conquest of Protestant England. Against it come forth Drake, and Hawkins, and Howard, and a thousand more of ‘England’s forgotten worthies’ in ship, and sloop, and pinnace, ill-armed and ill-fed, but worrying, tearing, and rending like the sea-dogs that they are. The galleons are inert as knights in heavy armour. The skies change, and hearts change with them, and in the end all is confusion and fear, flight and destruction.

It is a magnificent tragedy magnificently told. We should have to go to Syracuse or Constantinople for an equal. Then the curtain drops, and the author speaks the epilogue. England had established her right to be free to choose her own religion. In the awful crisis of her fortunes Catholic and Protestant had fought shoulder to shoulder. The rents, which thought had made, action had healed. The nation settled for a time into the uneasy compromise toward

which the statesmanship of Henry and Elizabeth had been drawing them on. Anglicanism came to self-consciousness in the writings of Hooker. England, it was apparent, was entering upon a new phase, and the centre of rebellion shifted from the Catholics to the Protestants.

Froude had written an epic on the birth of Modern England. The moral of the book was that men, to be men, must be religious, and that religion, to be religion, must be manly. If, in this strange sea of life in which we find ourselves, we are to keep our heads above water, our thought and our faith must be in harmony, else we shall sink, not swim.

"Religion," he said in some of the concluding words of his history, "is the attitude of reverence in which noble-minded people instinctively place themselves towards the unknown Power which made man and his dwelling-place. It is the natural accompaniment of their lives, the sanctification of their actions and their acquirements. It is what gives to man, in the midst of the rest of creation, his special elevation and dignity."¹

There was one living man who had, as he well knew, taught all this yet more earnestly than himself. Carlyle had all the faith of the Hebrew prophets without their hope. Froude thought that Cheyne Row contained by far the greatest man of the age—a man religious as Newman, yet not reactionary. In an unpublished letter to

¹ "History of England," xii. p. 535.

Lord Derby written about a year after Carlyle's death, he gave what is perhaps his finest estimate of his master's worth and teaching :—

“Isaiah had no new morality to teach. Jesus Christ's doctrines were not original. In ordinary times men acknowledge the moral part of these doctrines to be true, but do not act as if they were true, and therefore do not really believe them to be true. Men rise from time to time, whose function it is to insist upon their truth, to show in vivid detail the consequence of neglecting them, to show that the first business of men in this world is really and truly to be men, and not machines for making money or tinkering constitutions, or enjoying what they call pleasure. I conceive this to have been Carlyle's mission, and that all his writings have this for their common focus. He did not believe, like Rousseau, that civilisation was degeneracy, (that) the savage state was the best, but he thought that all nations had their times of growth and decay, and that England once produced far finer individual men than she produces now. He regarded us (as) going down hill, as the Romans went down after the first Cæsars; and he expected a similar end for us. Something better would eventually rise out of the wreck.”

Of this man Froude was called upon to write the life. Great preachers are expected to practice what they preach. Had Carlyle been tried by his own standard he would have emerged, if not scatheless, at least with honour. He had been in private, as in public, courageous, truthful, forcible. The public tried him by the

code of Christ, and condemned for irritability, inconsiderateness, and want of calm. Against Froude there ought to be no word of blame. He told the story of his master's life in sunshine and shadow, faithfully, and beautifully as Carlyle would have wished it told. Those who have tried to blacken his character have merely darkened their own.

Carlyle's gospel had been the gospel of strength. In the establishment and maintenance of order among human beings he found the root of greatness, and in the sense of order a guarantee of conscience. No man, he thought, to whom his fellows had looked up could be greatly wicked. A king that was king indeed seemed to him invested with a spiritual as well as a temporal majesty; to be like Melchizedek, priest as well as king.¹ In Cromwell he thought he saw the perfect embodiment of kingly greatness.

It is easy and probably right to be cynical. Most great men, as Lord Acton thought,² have been bad men, and human admiration is not, perhaps, the least corrupt of human instincts. Froude, however, was differently affected. In the monkish legends of the saints he had recognised the presence of a common type, which in its time had quickened and guided the whole of western society.³ Chivalry had been the

¹ Carlyle, "Heroes and Hero-worship" the chapter on "The Hero as King."

² "Lord Acton's Letters to Mary Gladstone," p. 122.

³ "Short Studies," pp. 562-564.

effect of an effort on the part of the mediæval Church to bring the thoughts of Christ and His mother into the rough and often bloody work of every day. Before 'the silent figures sleeping on the tombs'—figures such as lie in the round church of the Temple, where he was often a worshipper—Froude revered the grace of knightly purity as one of the most precious gifts that had dropped from Heaven to ennoble poor Humanity. These splendid warriors, sleeping cross-legged till the day of resurrection, were as much the creation of the cloistered saints with their intense, if narrow vision, as those Gothic cathedrals, "perhaps, on the whole, the most magnificent creation which the mind of man has as yet thrown out of itself."¹

Times had changed. The monks had glided after their tales down the stream of time. But no new ideal had come to replace the old one, and men wandered as sheep having no shepherd. A responsibility seemed to rest with men of letters, to evoke a common type of nobility which should stir the hearts of the young men of the nineteenth century as the *Iliad*, or the *Sagas*, or the monkish legends had stirred Greeks and Norsemen, and Catholics hundreds of years ago.² Carlyle had set up Cromwell as a model of high English character. With that model Froude agreed, and in his turn drew men's eyes back

¹ "Short Studies," i. p. 565.

² *Ibid.*, p. 582.

towards Cæsar—Cæsar scoured and polished by Mommsen's brush and chisel—as a fit object for the meditation of young imperialists. His book on "Cæsar" seemed to him the best he had written,¹ and it is beyond all doubt a brilliant sketch brilliantly executed. Sellar, who could speak with great authority, said that wherever the narrative dealt with Cæsar, that is through three-fourths of it, he read with sympathy and assent, as unqualified as his pleasure and admiration.² Yet, for all that, as a moral essay—and all Froude's books were moral essays—it is strangely ineffective. "The heart of the nation," he says boldly in his unpublished Fragment, "is in its armies." Yet an antagonism, never finally resolved, ran through his "Cæsar" as through his own nature. Carlyle told him he got no good out of the book,³ and we can easily see the reason. Between the king of this world, whom his master revered, and the King not of this world, whom Newman had long ago at Oxford taught him to think greater than the sons of men, Froude had never clearly made his choice. In a sentence, the last of the book, afterwards rightly cut out, he instituted a curious parallel between the lives, and aims, and deaths of Christ and Cæsar. People thought the comparison profane, and it was certainly false. Between

¹ Paul, "Life of Froude," p. 338.

² *Fraser's Magazine*, September 1879, p. 332.

³ Paul, "Life of Froude," p. 343.

those who take short, sharp cuts to reform and Him, who sowed moral revolutions in grains of mustard seed, there is no kinship or acquaintance. Their life and work is simply incommensurable. The best, and perhaps more than the best, that can be said of Cæsar, Cromwell, Napoleon—if we look to the true interest of mankind—is ‘stern necessity.’ When men have grown so vile, or nations so depraved, or institutions so decrepit that to root them out is to do God service, we might fairly ask that those who do the work should cover their faces with a mask, and that the pages of their history be sealed up. They are no models for patriots ; for moderate men do not fail because they are moderate, but because they are few. It had been Cranmer, not Henry, as Froude himself had taught, who had won the battle of the Reformation.

The influence of Cæsar and Cromwell was very strong upon him. Right, he argued with dangerous subtlety, tended in civilised societies to create might,¹ and he enforced the doctrine in a book on English rule in Ireland, which Lecky condemned—and Lecky’s moral judgments were always weighty—as a bad one.² The purpose of it was to show that the Irish were, as Cromwell and Clare (in whom Froude found the prototype of the late Lord Salisbury³) thought they were,

¹ “The English in Ireland,” i. p. 2.

² Lecky, “History of England,” ii. pp. 95, 101, 169.

³ Paul, “Life of Froude,” p. 244.

an inferior race needing to be governed with a heavy hand. Imperialism seemed to him to be doubly blessed; powerful at the same time to civilise the savage, and to elicit and preserve the highest qualities of the English. Yet, like Carlyle, he saw in us a likeness to the society of Clodius and Milo, and was fearful lest it should extend to an identity. Democracy and Science, held in check for eighteen centuries, by Cæsar and the Church—strange allies strangely matched—were returning upon us hand in hand.¹ Could we found at last such a commonwealth as Harrington had fancied for us, at once free and terrible?

A few years before "Oceana" was written circumstance had given Froude a chance of playing a not inconsiderable part in imperial politics. In 1874 Disraeli came into power, and Lord Carnarvon went to the Colonial Office. In South Africa both the native and the Anglo-Dutch questions were giving trouble. Cape Colony had been compelled to lend assistance to Natal to suppress Langalibalele, a native chief, whose offences were rather anticipated than accomplished. Further west a dispute had arisen about Griqualand, where lay the Diamond Fields, lately discovered. Carnarvon wanted special knowledge, and Froude went out to get it.

He was not long in making up his mind. The

¹ "Oceana," p. 25.

natives would be best kept under control if the whites made common cause; and that meant a South African confederation. In the matter of the Diamond Fields he saw that a great wrong had been done. By treaty and pledge¹ we had been bound to let alone the tribes beyond the Vaal and Orange Rivers. Nevertheless, Lord Kimberley, acting on behalf of Gladstone's government, had contrived to reclaim Griqualand West for a Basuto chief, and take the most valuable part of it for the British people. He intended to annex the new province to Cape Colony, but when the time came the Cape Dutch would not receive the stolen property of their kinsmen beyond the Orange River. There was small blame to them for not keeping their word, since the transaction had been one of those which help the impartial observer to understand why we are thought on the continent to be no better than a race of hypocrites.

It is the especial glory of men of letters—a glory outweighing many weaknesses—that they have had the claims of justice more constantly at heart than any other class of men whatsoever. Froude saw with a clear and steady eye. In the Boers he perceived some of the qualities he most revered—courage, dogged endurance, Puritan faith. In the conduct of the British

¹ Sand and Orange River Conventions. Answer of Sir G. Cathcart to Nicholas Waterboer in 1853.

Government he perceived an absence of fidelity sufficient to alienate a well-tried friend. He urged Carnarvon to redress the wrong. Carnarvon sent him back in the following year (1875) as the accredited envoy of the Mother Country. He was to represent England at a conference of the South African States designed to settle the miserable affair by amicable agreement. He found Cape Colony in a ferment. Carnarvon's despatch, suggesting the conference, had been held up by the Molteno ministry as an example of English interference with responsible government. Molteno himself did not think the times were ripe for federation, and was no friend to a proposal which might, he thought, revive the animosity between the eastern and western districts of the Colony,¹ the one the home of English capital, the other of Dutch agriculture. He may or may not have been wise; in reading the history of South Africa, as in reading the history of Ireland, one is apt to feel that any and every policy would have been blessed, if only it had been consistently pursued from start to finish. But he certainly forgot, that so long as South Africa remained unfederated, the control of intra-colonial relations was left to the judgment of the Secretary of State acting through the High Commissioner. Carnarvon, right or wrong, had a right to his support in bringing together the

¹ Each was to be separately represented at the Conference.

leading South African statesmen. Anyway, it was plainly necessary for Froude to get the real tenor of Carnarvon's despatch explained and justified. But Barkly, the Governor of the Cape, gave him no help, and in the end he spoke out plainly, keeping as clear as he could of local politics. No doubt he was sometimes rash, for even Prime Ministers sometimes appear to lose their heads on the platform, and Froude, a man wholly untrained, was faced by a situation of rare difficulty. Like all idealists, he saw better what ought to be done than what could be done. The response that he evoked was not strong enough to overpower the resistance of Molteno. Had it been seen so, it is not improbable that certain Zulu wars and Boer wars, which afford no pleasant recollections, would never have been. With Carnarvon's later policy, and Frere's virtual dictatorship he did not agree. Confederation, if it came, must, he felt, come with the force of public opinion behind it.¹ That public opinion he had tried to arouse, and of the way in which he had done so Carnarvon fully approved.² One thing his visit did effect. Wrong was made right in Griqualand West. Cape Colony agreed to annex it, and the President of the Free State came to England and received an indemnity of £90,000, in satisfaction of his country's claim.

¹ "Oceana," p. 44.

² I. P.—C.—1399, p. 89 (quoted in Molteno's "Life of Molteno," ii. p. 57).

Literary men seldom get a warm welcome in the world of affairs. After the South African episode, Froude was left to promote the imperial spirit by word, and no longer by deed. "Oceana" and "The Bow of Ulysses" are the patriotic reflections of a traveller very proud of his country, and very fearful of her decay. His foresight was very remarkable. He saw, as clearly as any present-day imperialist, the great weight which numbers must have in any world-struggle.¹ In the colonies numbers could grow, and grow in health. To link her children to the Mother Country would give us, not perhaps wealth, but power. But he was, at first, distrustful of federative schemes, colonial peerages, tariffs,² and the like. Every attempt to tighten the chain must, he felt, as well he might after the South African affair, come from the colonies themselves. Yet from the unpublished fragment of his West Indian diary, it appears that he came, in the end, to look on an imperial tariff with a friendly eye:—

"I feel more and more clear . . . that we must be connected through a Zollverein, or not at all. Probably our own people will come round to reciprocity before long. But they should begin with the Colonies. Protection even against foreign corn would not really injure the British citizen. It would scarcely raise the price of corn 2s. a quarter, if Indian and Australian came in duty free, while he would gain everything else. But nothing good will be got out of the present

¹ "The Bow of Ulysses," pp. 206, 207.

² "Oceana," pp. 193, 222-223.

generation of statesmen who have Free Trade on the brain."

The main purpose of "The Bow of Ulysses" was to get protection for the West Indian sugar-planters. And, like other prophets, Froude was to foresee more than he realised. Much as he disliked Liberal politicians, and Gladstone in particular, he made an exception in favour of one. "I like Chamberlain," he wrote in 1882. "He knows his mind. There is no dust in his eyes, and he throws no dust in the eyes of others."¹ For domestic politics, however, and party conflicts he cared very little. "A wise man," he said, "keeps both his eyes open, belongs to no party, and can see things as they are."²

This is, of course, a proper, though not always a possible, attitude for a historian. But Froude was far too great a man to be deluded into supposing that history is therefore a colourless compilation of chronicles and criticisms. He chose Tacitus as his model; a man in whom, alone, he found 'serene calmness of insight' combined with 'intensity of feeling.'³ Further than this no human being might hope to go.

"Faithful and literal history," he said in a passage of profound truth, "is possible only to an impassive spirit. Man will never write it until perfect knowledge and faith in God shall enable

¹ Paul, "Life of Froude," p. 345.

² Oceana," p. 175.

³ "Short Studies," i. p. 555.

him to see and endure every fact in its reality ; until perfect love shall kindle in him under its touch the one just emotion which is in harmony with the eternal order of all things.”¹

We must recognise and accept our limitations. If we do so, with these thoughts in our mind, the course of history will be best represented as a drama played on a gigantic scale, where the great world-forces of right and wrong execute their just unvarying laws. More than this, we cannot make it, or else it will mock us, offering ‘in its passive irony’² a selection of facts from which we may fashion any and every theory we please—Zeitgeists, fatalisms, miraculous interpositions of Providence. (And he quotes Napoleon : “What is history but a fiction agreed upon?”) Less than this we dare not make it, or it will smile grimly at us across the mists of Time and marvel at the shortness of our vision.

“One lesson, and only one, history may be said to repeat with distinctness ; that the world is built somehow on moral foundations ; that in the long run it is well with the good ; in the long run it is ill with the wicked. But this is no science ; it is no more than the old doctrine taught long ago by the Hebrew prophets.”³

One great value of history, he adds cynically, is its constant assertion of the futility of forebodings. Read it for its moral quality and its

¹ “Short Studies,” i. p. 554.

² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

dramatic intensity, and you have read its soul. Shakespeare had no philosophy to satisfy. He looked at life, saw the real things in it, and painted what he saw.¹ Every historian, who knows his art, will do the same.

Froude never forgot these early conclusions. In the history of the Reformation he set himself on the side of the moral element ; as for the rest it was a play with real men and women in it. A curious critic will notice that the other great imaginative historians had each lived with a poet. Tacitus had steeped himself in Virgil ; Carlyle in Goethe.

Two of the lesser gems of English literature are the monographs Froude wrote on Cæsar and Beaconsfield. Of the position of the first in his moral scheme enough has already been said. As a dramatic effort its value is much greater. Every one knows, at least, by reputation the dry excellence of Cæsar's Commentaries ; how, perhaps, the greatest feat of generalship is told without vanity and without self-suppression. Froude's biography is a kind of complement to the Commentaries. Here all that colour, enthusiasm, romance, can do for Cæsar's exploits, is achieved. The description of the battle of Alesia is an astonishing piece of word-painting, if we compare it with the sober narrative of the original ; yet the writer has dealt carefully with

¹ "Short Studies," i. p. 29.

his materials. "Lord Beaconsfield" is conceived in another vein. Once more romance, colour, charm, lend their aid. Once more the central figure seems to gather around it all the varied movement of the age. But in Cæsar the main interest is political, whilst the other gives us Disraeli as he really was and wished to be—the mysterious visitant at a masked ball, whom every one suspects and no one quite manages to discover.

Of Froude's style there is little need to speak. Mr Paul has said the last word about that. It is 'the perfection of grace.'¹ Severe classical perfection, like Newman's or Landor's, it has not. Its secret lies in the delightful *abandon* of the manner, the broad-sweeping generalisations which weld together the narrative, the rich tones and harmonies of the language.

Froude was much more than a historian. He was one of the personalities of his time, famous for his talk, his charm, his culture, his friendships. Skelton has left a singularly attractive description of him as he appeared to his friends: the coal-black hair, the massive deeply-lined features, the luminous dark eyes, the rapid play of expression, impassive as Disraeli's when he wished it, the distinguished presence, the hand steady with rod or gun.² To one, who chanced to see something of him in middle life, his look

¹ "The perfection of easy, graceful narrative." — Paul, "Life of Froude," p. 124.

² Skelton, "Table-talk of Shirley," pp. 120, 121.

gave the impression of mingled sarcasm and kindliness. Oxford men, who were lucky enough to be up during the two years of his professorship, were struck with the singular beauty of his voice. But his personality is inscribed for all time on the pages of the "Short Studies," those 'observations and experiences of a single voyager floating down a river, and unable to conjecture whither he is bound.' There, with perfect taste and judgment, fit to be compared to that of the "Apologia," he has made the revelation of himself, grouping his thoughts on religion, and politics, and life quite naturally round books, and fables, and events. The influence of these four volumes is incalculable. Every thinking Oxford undergraduate has had one or other of them in his hands, and no one can have turned over their pages without becoming, in no jesting sense, a sadder and a wiser man. The most humorous of them—humorous in the fullest sense, all laughter and tears—is "The Cat's Pilgrimage."

The Cat is one of those unlucky people of moderate opportunities, who are born with a desire to be of some use, to live unselfishly, to leave a mark upon the world. She cannot submit to sleep, to be fed, to take things as they come. She consults her companion the Dog, but he can see no sort of advantage in exchanging epicureanism for knight - errantry. He is of

excellent good sense, tells her not to cultivate a conscience, to accept life as she finds it, and to ask no questions. This, however, brings her no peace. She leaves the Dog on the hearth-rug, and passes out into the world, to learn what she is here for. "Do your duty and get your dinner," says the Ox, in answer to her question. "I have no duty," she complains to the Bee, who remarks that, if this be so, the other is a worthless drone, and hurries on her way. The Owl recommends meditation. "Meditation on what?" she innocently enquires. "Upon which came first, the Owl or the Egg," is the reply.

In despair and feeling hungry, she begins to seek her dinner, but, after hemming in her quarry in the person of a Rabbit, is too unaccustomed and too pitiful to slay it. Lastly, she visits the Fox, who laughs at her humanitarian scruples, and points out that in this evil world the weakest goes of right to the wall. This brings the pilgrimage to an end. She gives the Dog her conclusions next day. "All the creatures I met were happy because they had their several businesses to attend. As I have been bred to do nothing, I must try to do that."

The piece was written in 1850, just after Froude had resigned his fellowship, but it might have been written in 1894. Neither from Carlyle nor any one else did he ever learn any other philosophy

than that of blind yet faithful duty. The only tolerable explanation of this puzzling universe he had deliberately rejected, and Christianity without Christ never satisfies. For the conventional narcotics and stimulants with which lesser men dull or dispel the problem, he had an amused contempt. Happiness as the end of life he valued at its proper absurdity in the mouths of people who revere 'the Man of Sorrows' as their God or Teacher.¹ His own theology never advanced beyond, though it never fell behind, the famous sentiment in the book of Job:—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." To the first part of the "Analogy" he remained unfalteringly loyal, after he had abandoned the second as special pleading.² The world was always for him, a moral world in which great, though hidden, purposes were being worked out. And this confidence kept his judgment eminently sane in respect of some of those practical matters on which curious thinkers are apt to run their barks aground. On the question of shooting, for example—a very touchstone for common sense—he counselled and practised great moderation. He loved wild sport; he hated artificial battues.³ On the other hand, in his historical judgments, his belief in the justice of even vicarious retribution tended

¹ "Short Studies," ii. p. 55.

² *Ibid.*, p. 116.

³ Paul, "Life of Froude," p. 315.

to make him appear rather pitiless towards all the servants of the Pope, from More to Mary and Babington.

In spite of all his brilliant literary and social success, the ironies of life were always too strong for him. Like the Cat, he found himself excluded by Fate from a life of action, such as other men led, and to think about the ultimate questions is always a little like chasing the problem of the Owl and the Egg. He had wished in early life to be a physician,¹ and always regretted that he had not been one, since from that as from the other liberal professions, he was for many years shut off by the fact of his having received Holy Orders. In all literature, perhaps, there is no such pathetic confession as that in which he cites and endorses his master's verdict on literary work.

"It often strikes me as a question," Carlyle had said, "whether there ought to be any such thing as a literary man at all. He is surely the wretchedest of all sorts of men. I wish with the heart occasionally I had never been one."

"Let young men," comments Froude, "who are dreaming of literary eminence as the laurel wreath of their existence, reflect on these words. Let them win a place for themselves as high as Carlyle won; they will find that he was speaking no more than the truth, and will wish, when it is too late, that they had been wise in time. Literature — were it even poetry — is but the shadow of action; the action the reality, the

poetry an echo. The *Odyssey* is but the ghost of Ulysses—immortal, but a ghost still; and Homer himself would have said in some moods with his own Achilles:—

“βουλοίμην κ’ ἐπάρουρος ἔων θητευέμεν ἄλλω,
ἀνδρὶ παρ’ ἀκλήρῳ, ᾧ μὴ βίोटος πολὺς εἴη,
ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν.”¹

Gibbon, it is to be feared, would have given them both a short shrift:—

“I am disgusted with the affectation of men of letters who complain that they have renounced a substance for a shadow; and that their fame (which sometimes is no insupportable weight) affords a poor compensation for envy, censure, and persecution.”²

Carlyle and Froude, at least, were guiltless of affectation, and their fame is not likely to be soon forgotten. The clouds that darkened their sky lay on a far horizon, to which Gibbon’s eyes had never pierced. It might have been said of them, as it has been said of Lucian, that “men of genius as they were, they were looking at human life from far above, with no limitations of time, and passing a judgment which may be repeated in the thirtieth century.”³ It was

¹ Carlyle’s “Life in London,” i. p. 130. “Rather would I live upon the earth as the hireling of another, with a landless man who had no great livelihood, than bear sway among all the dead that be departed.”—Butcher and Lang on *Odyssey*, xi. 489.

² Gibbon, “Memoirs,” p. 236.

³ Dill, “Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius.”

so with many of their contemporaries — with Tennyson, Ruskin, Arnold, with almost all the finest spirits of the age except Browning. And it would be idle to deny that the wonderful beauty and power of their prose and verse owes much to the profound melancholy that breathes in every line. Froude certainly was no exception. Though he was passionately fond of Homer, it was the brooding spirit of Virgil flavoured with a dash of the mockery of Lucian to which his own was akin. Or, if one cared to look for a fanciful resemblance in a different sphere of art, one might liken him to Botticelli—Botticelli who had sat under Savonarola, Botticelli as he might have been if he had ever come under the mind of Michelangelo. The voices of Newman and Carlyle were always sounding about his ears. Men who have listened to the prophets can never be again as if they had not. Those who gaze often into the starry heights will find the earth a poor spectacle, and men a little breed.

The last of many vicissitudes came in 1894, when he had lived long enough to fulfil a two years' Professorship of History at Oxford, where his labours met with a splendid, though too tardy, recognition. As he lay on his death-bed by the Devon coast, in some of the last moments of consciousness, he repeated those wonderful

words, which, as a recent critic¹ has pointed out, are so often and so wrongly regarded as Shakespeare's final verdict upon life :—

“ To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle,
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.”

Like his well-loved Elizabethan seamen, “he did what he did from the great unrest in him which made him do it.”²

¹ A. C. Bradley, “Shakesperean Tragedy,” p. 359.

² “Short Studies,” i. p. 457.

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The references in this article are to the fourth edition of the "History of England" (Longmans, 1867); the 1885 edition of the "Short Studies"; the 1894 edition of "Oceana"; the fourth edition (1885) of "Carlyle's Life in London"; the Silver Library edition of "The English in Ireland."

The principal authorities for Froude's life are Herbert Paul, "Life of Froude" and Skelton, "Table-talk of Shirley." Through the kindness of Miss Froude, the author has also had the privilege of reading Froude's unpublished fragment of Autobiography; and, through the kindness of Lady Margaret Cecil, Froude's letters to Mary, Lady Derby.

Froude has been the object of many attacks, some of them extremely embittered by prejudice. The person chiefly responsible was Freeman, who inaugurated them anonymously in the columns of the *Saturday Review*, and closed them without disguise in the *Contemporary Review* for 1877 and 1878. Froude replied to his critic in the *Nineteenth Century* for April 1879, and Freeman rebutted in the *Contemporary Review* for May. Mr Paul, in the chapter on "Froude and Freeman," in his "Life of Froude," has told the painful story of the controversy. Lecky's chapters on Ireland in his "History of England in the Eighteenth Century" are a criticism of Froude's view of Irish history contained in "The English in Ireland."

Mr P. A. Molteno, "Life and Times of Sir John Molteno," has written a long criticism of Carnarvon's South African policy, accompanied by a running fire of criticism on Froude, Frere, and all opponents of his father.

It does not seem necessary to specify the attacks made on Froude's integrity in the matter of Carlyle's life. They ought never to have been made nor published.

All charges against Froude, although made by high authorities, must, however, be received with caution. MM. Langlois and Seignobos, the eminent French historians, think proper to remark in their "Introduction aux Études Historiques," that "J. A. Froude était un écrivain très bien doué, mais sujet à ne rien affirmer qui ne fût entaché d'erreur ; on a dit de lui qu'il était *constitutionally inaccurate*." ¹ The *only* evidence brought forward in support of this tremendous indictment is a reference to an article by Mr H. A. L. Fisher, in the *Fortnightly Review*, December 1894.

Froude had written :—

"We rose slightly from the sea, and at the end of the seven miles we saw below us, in a basin with the river winding through it, a city of 150,000 inhabitants, not one of whom has ever known or will know, a moment's anxiety as to the recurring regularity of his three meals a day." ²

"Adelaide," says Mr Fisher, "is on high ground, not in a valley ; there is no river running through it ; its population was not more than 75,000, and, at the very moment when Mr Froude visited it, a large portion of that population was on the verge of starvation." ³

In point of fact, Adelaide, though it stands on high ground, is shut in at some distance by a semi-circle of heights, and the River Torrens, which flows down from these hills, winds, as Froude said, through the basin and into Adelaide, where it is damned up so as to form an artificial lake, from which some of its waters find their way into St Vincent's Gulf. Froude's description of Adelaide, though it appears to be incorrect as a description of the view seen, as he suggests, on approaching it from the sea, is not incorrect as a description of it from another point of view ⁴ (which Froude had probably in his mind when

¹ Langlois and Seignobos, "Introduction aux Études Historiques," p. 101.

² "Oceana," p. 75.

³ *Fortnightly Review*, December 1894, p. 815.

⁴ See the articles in the "Encyclo. Brit.," "La Grande Encyclopedie," and (more closely contemporary with Froude's visit) in the "Handbook for South Australia," 1886 (Br. Mus. Press-mark 7959d. 28).

he wrote), and Mr Fisher's flat denials are calculated to give a wholly false idea of Froude's powers of observation.¹

In respect of Froude's statement about the population, matters stand thus. At the census of 1881, the population of Adelaide, including the suburbs, was 67,954.² Froude visited it in 1885. In the "Handbook for South Australia," published on the occasion of the Colonial Exhibition in London in 1886, the population is estimated at 100,000 to 110,000 souls, inclusive of the suburbs. Froude seems therefore to have made a bad shot, or been misinformed; but his mistake was not so gross as Mr Fisher supposes, and accurate information as to the amount of the growing and shifting population of a new country is never easy to get.

Froude's other statement that no inhabitant of Adelaide has ever known, or will know any anxiety about his three meals a day is, of course and obviously, hyperbolic. No one accuses the spies of inaccuracy, because they said the land of Canaan was flowing with milk and honey; and Froude may surely be permitted to give the impression of a wealthy land by a loose figure. But I can find no reason to think with Mr Fisher that in the early part of 1885 a large portion of the population of Adelaide was "on the verge of starvation." There was, indeed, some distress and some anxiety, owing principally to several disastrous fires, but from 1883-1889 very considerable advances in prosperity were made throughout the colony,³ and the death-rate in 1885 was only 12.92 per 1,000 inhabitants, as against 15.78 in 1884 and 13.95 in 1886.⁴

But, if a meticulous accuracy is to be exacted, what can be said for eminent historians, who, writing under the high responsibility of correcting a fellow-student, and after informing

¹ Mr Fisher very kindly asks me to say that he is satisfied, that, although Froude's description of Adelaide, taken in its context, is not wholly unexceptionable, his own charges are not made in such a manner as to be fair to Froude, and that the second of them is indefensible. He asks me to add that his information was derived from an article by E. Wakefield in the *Nineteenth Century* for August 1886.

² "Year-book of Australia," 1885.

³ Hodder, "History of South Australia," ch. xvi.

⁴ Woods, "Handbook of South Australia," p. 220.

us that "the historian ought to distrust *à priori* every statement of an author, for he cannot be sure that it is not mendacious or mistaken,"¹ not only proceed to damn Froude's reputation without any critical examination of Mr Fisher's allegations, but put their condemnation in such a form as to make it palpably untrue, for to say that Froude *never* made any statement not disfigured by error is ridiculous? Besides 'constitutional inaccuracy' there is surely *unconstitutional inaccuracy*—inaccuracy not permitted by the conventions of criticism.

In conclusion I cannot refrain from asking the reader, who is inclined to judge Froude hardly, to read the following estimate of the historian, whose pre-eminence in the modern world will scarcely be attacked—Gibbon. He will find it very instructive. These are the words with which Guizot prefaces his translation of the "Decline and Fall":—

"Après une première lecture rapide, qui ne m'avait laissé sentir que l'intérêt d'une narration, toujours animée malgré son étendue, toujours claire malgré la variété des objets qu'elle fait passer sous nos yeux, je suis entré dans un examen minutieux des détails dont elle se compose, et l'opinion que je m'en suis formée alors a été, je l'avoue, singulièrement sévère. J'ai rencontré dans certains chapitres des erreurs qui m'ont paru assez importantes et assez multipliées pour me faire croire qu'ils avaient été écrits avec une extrême négligence; dans d'autres, j'ai été frappé d'une teinte générale de partialité et de prévention, qui donnait à l'exposé des faits ce défaut de vérité et de justice, que les anglais désignent par le mot heureux de *misrepresentation*; quelques citations tronquées, quelques passages, omis involontairement ou à dessein, m'ont rendu suspecte la bonne foi de l'auteur; et cette violation de la première loi de l'histoire, grossie à mes yeux par l'attention prolongée avec laquelle je m'occupais de chaque phrase, de chaque note, de chaque réflexion, m'a fait porter sur tout l'ouvrage un jugement beaucoup trop rigoureux. Après avoir terminé mon travail, j'ai laissé s'écouler quelque temps avant d'en revoir l'ensemble. Une nouvelle lecture attentive et suivie de l'ouvrage entier, des notes de l'auteur et de celles que j'avais cru devoir y joindre, m'a montré combien je m'étais exagéré l'importance des reproches que méritait Gibbon; j'ai été frappé des mêmes

¹ Langlois and Seignobos, "Introduction to the Study of History" (English translation), p. 157.

erreurs, de la même partialité sur certains sujets ; mais j'étais loin de rendre assez de justice à l'immensité de ses recherches, à la variété de ses connaissances, à l'étendue de ses lumières, et surtout à cette justesse vraiment philosophique de son esprit, qui juge le passé comme il jugerait le présent, sans se laisser offusquer par ces nuages que le temps amasse autour des morts, et qui souvent nous empêchent de voir que sous la toge comme sous l'habit moderne . . . les hommes étaient ce qu'il sont encore. . . . Alors j'ai senti que Gibbon, malgré ses faiblesses, était vraiment un habile historien ; que son livre, malgré ses défauts, serait toujours un bel ouvrage, et qu'on pouvait relever ses erreurs et combattre ses préventions ; sans cesser de dire que peu d'hommes ont réuni sinon à un aussi haut degré, du moins d'une manière aussi complète et aussi bien ordonnée, les qualités nécessaires à celui qui veut écrire l'histoire."¹

¹ Guizot's Introduction to his French translation of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," pp. 7, 8.

WALTER PATER

1839-1894

Ritualism old and new—Catholicity in Art—Pater's childhood—The collision with Ruskin—Ruskin's theory of Art—Pater's divergence—"Diaphaneité"—The gospel of Culture—Pater's theory of Art—The essay on "Æsthetic Poetry"—"Renaissance Studies": Leonardo; Botticelli; Pico—"Greek Studies"; The "Bacchæ"; "Demeter and Kore"—Pater's special talent—"Marius the Epicurean"—Marius and John Inglesant—"Imaginary Portraits"—"A Prince of Court Painters"; "Sebastian van Storck"—London life—The last phase—Oxford again—The end—His work and style—His religion sometimes followed to-day.

"Dr Anodyne. In an age like ours, in which music and pictures are the predominant tastes, I do not wonder that the forms of the old Catholic worship are received with increasing favour. There is a sort of adhesion to the old religion, which results less from faith than from a feeling of poetry; it finds its disciples; but it is of modern growth; and has very essential differences from what it resembles."

—PEACOCK, *Gryll Grange*, ch. xi.

RITUALISM, the conscious observance of certain well-tried forms of worship, calculated to give a stimulus to, or even to supply the absence of, the energy of faith, has been too commonly the herald of the decline of those very beliefs which it desires to figure forth and preserve, to be anything more than an object of pathetic interest to the eye of the student of history. It is as distinct from that joyous spirit of ritual, which has the power to imagine and create all these

beautiful symbols, as the winding-sheet is distinct from the marriage garment. Each, indeed, may be fashioned of the finest linen, but only a dull eye will confound the sad memorial of decay with the pledge of affection. A cultivated sense of the holiness which is latent in all beautiful things is as sharply separate from that sense of the beauty of holiness required by the Psalmist of himself, in order to fit him for the performance of the highest act of which a human creature is capable, as the pale lustre of the northern skies from the kindly glow of the summer sun. And as the eye will sometimes cheat the body, making it warm with light alone, so the perception of beauty will sometimes simulate the apprehension of it, and a man find at last that he has been loving all the while only the appearance of the thing and never known the thing itself.

In the wake of the Oxford Movement, in the track of the Catholic Revival, there followed a group of men, of whom Walter Pater is the most notable, as he is also by far the noblest representative. These men sought to be catholic in the natural sense of the word—in that daring and difficult sense in which Shakespeare and Goethe, not, perhaps, entirely without loss, are catholic—by treating every variety of character, however divergent from or hostile to the ideal type, as in itself valuable, as food for that full existence of ever-varying sensation, which is

becoming more and more plainly the native element of the man of culture; by making Richard II.—or, to put an extreme instance, Bardolph—not contemptible or foul (as in any strictly moral view of humanity they must certainly appear), but merely the objects of an amused or kindly sympathy, as grateful to the fools and knaves of society, as well as to the heroes, and conscious that without them—the foils of high character and true enthusiasm—the artistic brilliancy of this earthly spectacle would be greatly impaired. Such a view of life, pressed to a conclusion, makes every experience worth a risk, and every chequered career a possession. From this ugly consequence, indeed, of an over-scrupulous logic, the great masters have carefully refrained; but it was precisely the snare into which the Oxford æsthetes of the nineteenth century fell. It was their *métier* to pluck the apple, not from any idea of wilful disobedience, still less from any wish to corrupt others, but exactly because it was pleasant to the eye and a tree to be desired to make one wise. And as they turned instinctively towards all things that appeared pleasant and lovely, so they instinctively rejected all things that were painful or hideous, and not least that sordid inglorious life of the poor,—the poor in spirit as well as those literally in want,—where dulness is the only pathos, but where, and, with especial hope,

Christ had fixed His gaze. Pater's literary career reads like a latter-day rendering of the words of the Preacher, king in Jerusalem. His mind built for him every kind of intellectual palace, led him through all the halls of fancy, decked with rare and costly ornament, showed him every choice and exquisite work that was done under the sun; and, after this sore travail that God had given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith, brought him back at last, chastened and purified, to that same point from which, as a little child, he had started. Yet on those strange and silent seas of thought, where men fetch and carry so many argosies, he had been one of the most adventurous of voyagers and most skilful of merchantmen.

Pater was born in 1839, the son of a doctor, conspicuous for unselfish work among the poor. His boyhood is one of those rare ones which repay research and bring to the mind the saying of a spiritual director—that God makes it easy for us to believe as children, but, as we go on, gives us, in belief as in other things, the work of men to do. The child, indeed, had an almost unhealthy bent towards religion, carried it into his play, and preached sermons to his playmates. A chance encounter with Keble left ineffaceable memories. A little later the grey stones and Gothic lines of Canterbury entered into his soul; so that even when as a grown man he had

experienced the full impact of classical culture, he could only see in the Greek spirit 'the sangrail of an endless destiny.'¹ Close observers may find, or fancy that they find, other stigmata upon his pages:—of Hooker, whose parish of Bishopsbourne lay at no great distance from Canterbury; of Lamb and Keats, who had actually lived at Enfield; of the Throckmortons, the old Roman Catholic lords of Weston Underwood, under whose shadow the Paters of the eighteenth century had dwelt; and, chiefly and most confidently, of those Dutch ancestors of his, of whom one may really have been that Pater, who is remembered among the pupils of Watteau. "The Child in the House" and "Emerald Uthwart"—dainty, idealised, portraits of his boyhood etched in at the distance of many years—show how deeply the force of tradition had affected the grave, imaginative child.

At Oxford the gracious influences of the past swelled suddenly into fruit, then dropped rotting to the earth. He read Ruskin as an undergraduate at Queen's before he was twenty.² In "Modern Painters" he had in his hand the artistic complement of the Oxford Movement. The book was an appeal from shibboleths to reality, from convention to nature. Newman had heard God speaking, not from tomes of theology, but in the human conscience. Ruskin

¹ "Appreciations," p. 104.

² Gosse, "Critical Kit-kats."

saw Him walking among the trees of the Garden. "Modern Painters" put forward *Theôria*—an attitude of reverent contemplation, widely different from *Æsthesis*, mere pleasant sensation—as the one indispensable condition of all knowledge, or right judgment, or excellence, or true inspiration in art. The word came from Aristotle, and had found its interpreter in Dante. Ruskin required every one to put himself to school with Beatrice, with Heavenly Wisdom gazing into God's face.¹ Like Newman, he looked upon a liberal education, upon taste, as a likely barrier in the road to perfection.² The only matter was to do all to the glory of God. Those who had laboured in this spirit had succeeded; the others, weighed in the scales against pure gold, were found wanting.³

It was plain that with such canons as these Angelico alone had fulfilled the law; and indeed, as a spiritual painter Ruskin found no equal to him. But he was deficient in knowledge of the world, and he could hardly communicate with those who were mostly busy with other matters than the celestial hierarchy. Tintoret and Turner had satisfied the test of spiritual endeavour, yet had been under no temptation to lose sight of the facts of life. Turner especially, who had lit the world with the purest

¹ Ruskin, "Modern Painters," iv. ch. 14, section 37.

² *Ibid.*, iv. ch. 5, section 6. ³ *Ibid.*, iv. ch. 14, section 40.

sunlight, had never feared to see the greyness of the sky. Both painters had been true alike to earth and heaven. At every bend of the road Ruskin set up sign-posts to warn his readers against the fatal error of æstheticism, against 'art,' as we say, 'for art's sake,' which had been the undoing of Raphael. In the central and most significant passage of the book he says that great art is busy with the past and the future, restoring and evoking the images of ideas, not with the present—with what we may best see in actual existence.¹ Yet in all this imaginative work he requires that the closest regard be paid to nature; that men should paint not effects but facts,² remembering that "a man of deadened moral sensation is always dull in his perception of truth."³

"Modern Painters" was in fact an exhaustive treatise on beauty from the Christian standpoint. It set effort leagues above performance, and judged men rather by their faith than their works. In the noblest sense of the word it was an *ascetic* book. The true artist was enjoined, as really as the Christian neophyte, to forsake the world, the flesh, and the devil.

But artists were not to be coerced into joining the third order of St Francis, much less into wearing the cowl of the monk. Art, it seemed,

¹ "Modern Painters," iv. ch. 10, section 13.

² *Ibid.*, iv. ch. 7, section 97.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. ch. 2, section 4.

must be free to roam where it pleased, to eat freely of the tree of knowledge, to reproduce all things, not with the chastened calm of the mediævalists, but with the careless freedom of the Greeks. Ruskin had appealed to Nature; to Nature would they go—to faun and satyr and naiad, or their modern antitypes. They would paint what they saw and paint it as they saw it. There should be for art nothing that was not convenient. It was hardly found necessary to discard the old terms. The personal God, to whom Ruskin had required all art, as it valued its existence, to be dedicated, became, with how slight a stroke of the brush, a world-spirit coming to fuller self-consciousness in each new human sensation. Pater, of course, was too subtle to state these doctrines in their naked form, nor would it be just to say that he ever fully subscribed to them. But they are too-generous critics who think it a kind of accident that he became the idol and the philosopher of a school of thought, or rather of sensation, which healthy English instinct is agreed to refuse. When the author of "Dorian Gray"¹ said² that Pater's "Renaissance Studies" had for good or evil been the turning-point in his life, he bore the most convincing testimony to the presence in the book of a certain unwholesome fascination, which few of us are so right-minded as not in

¹ "The Portrait of Dorian Gray."

² In "De Profundis."

some degree to feel. And in that delicate study of childhood, which Pater published *nel mezzo del cammin* there is a pathetic sentence, decked out, one may fancy, with sackcloth and ashes, which speaks of "the rapid growth" in the child "of a certain capacity of fascination by bright colour and choice form . . . marking early the activity in him of a more than customary sensuousness, 'the lust of the eye,' as the Preacher says, which might lead him, one day, how far? Could he have foreseen the weariness of the way?"¹

Anyway, Pater, not fully conscious, it may have been, of what he was doing and yet certainly not unconscious, chose the delectable path, which broke away from the path of Ruskin—chose, like Faust, to know all; chose to let all the winds of the most tolerant liberalism blow across House Beautiful; chose art for art's sake. It was a momentous decision for himself as well as for others; and the effect of it was immediately apparent in his own life. The simple loyalty of childhood to its ancestral faith and accustomed ritual, so touchingly described long afterwards in "Emerald Uthwart," made way for Stanley and Maurice, who in their turn were displaced—as logic ran its course—by Plato and Hegel.² Christianity was aggressively criticised³ and Goethe rose into the midst of the heavens.⁴ This

¹ "Miscellaneous Studies," p. 181.

² Wright, "Life of Walter Pater," i. p. 170.

³ *Ibid.*, i. p. 169.

⁴ *Ibid.*, i. p. 199.

is that part of Pater's life, over which a biographer would gladly hurry his speed. Yet it is precisely that in which he was most completely a ritualist—a ritualist and nothing more. He was content to enjoy Catholic emotion without one struggle after Catholic faith. He affected high Anglican services;¹ let himself be soothed without conviction by the language of the pulpit;² and finally offered himself to the Bishop of London as a candidate for Holy Orders.³ But the consummation of this last disgrace was prevented by friends, acting on Liddon's advice. Within two years Pater's knowledge of German metaphysics had won him a fellowship at Brasenose, and by the time he was twenty-five he had sketched the character, which it became his steady purpose to achieve. The sketch is called "Diaphaneité"—Transparency.

The world, he remarked, sick with a great sickness, had been curiously tolerant of certain persons, separated by choice from the main-current of affairs and engaged in the contemplative life as saints, or artists, or thinkers. But there was another yet more finely grained type of character, akin to these, yet distinct from them, for which the world had at present no room or recognition. Persons, forged by circumstance to this scintillating keenness of edge, had for their aim in life to give to all things their

¹ Wright, "Life of Walter Pater," i. p. 201.

² *Ibid.*, i. p. 202.

³ *Ibid.*, i. p. 207.

eternal values ; and the peculiar characteristic of them was a certain wistfulness, anxious but without hope for real knowledge. Thus they sought rather to preserve a receptive attitude of mind than to put forward any definite propositions in the form of creeds or principles. They were precisely diaphanous—a medium through which the eye might see all things but not an object upon which the eye could find repose. Alien to the strong Titanic forces of the world, in the great crises of society they were effective, not as Luther and Danton were effective, but contrariwise by their calm and majestic impotence—vicarious sacrifices to the outraged furies that had been let loose. And Pater found in Charlotte Corday the example of such a character, though Falkland's was, almost certainly, the name he wanted. Tenderly considerate for the old lights of the past, yet wistfully eager for the new lights of the future, these people, who knew well how to tone all glaring colours by sympathy, were, he thought, best fitted to be the basal type of human character. A majority of men formed out of this clay would be 'the regeneration of the world.'

Mere culture, always a little comfortless on English soil, had at last found a perfect exponent. Free from the incubus of moral sentiment, Pater picked his way through the enchanted garden with an ease to which Arnold could not pretend. Coleridge, who had been busy with religious

philosophy after the German fashion and might have arrested his progress, he passed by, having just sipped the honey, not quite heather-sweet, of the poems, and toyed for a few pleasant minutes with the unstrained wine of the metaphysic. A year later he had found in Winkelmann a more congenial philosopher.¹ Goethe was never far off, and Pater stayed in their company. Winkelmann, reared in poverty, self-taught in face of the most adverse circumstances, had at last surrendered honour itself to buy a visit to Italy, and see such copies of the Greek masterpieces as were there preserved; thus displaying a fidelity to art which by its very concentration absorbed, as Pater thought, and in a sense justified that breach of the law of truth of which he had been guilty. Goethe, who regarded Winkelmann as his master, had said that life ought to be lived like a poem, and out of the very breadth of his understanding had made culture a practical ideal. Pater fell behind the one in enthusiasm, as he fell behind the other in knowledge. But he learnt from them to keep his eyes moving between the Greece of Pericles and the Italy of the Renaissance as between two beacon-lights in a world whose lustrous sun had for ever gone down.

It is proper at this point to make some attempt to indicate Pater's position in the philosophy

¹ *Cp.* "Renaissance Studies," p. 182.

of art. Ruskin, in ignorance of the peculiar properties of the word he was using, had thought to end controversy by telling men to paint according to Nature. In the event the expression proved as slippery for the artists as it had done for the philosophers. Impressionists, who seemed to Ruskin of all men the most degraded, boldly averred that they were the first to paint with eyes wide open, to see Nature as she really is. Between them and Turner the pre-Raphaelites stood midway, and it was with these that Pater really cast in his lot, even though, as Mr Benson thinks,¹ he never penetrated into their holy of holies. Nor is this to confound his standpoint with that of Ruskin. To the eye of each pre-Raphaelitism represented a gain for art. But the one was looking at it from the shelter and seclusion of a pleasant valley, the other as he climbed towards the snow and the sunshine. To the latter—to Ruskin—what seemed admirable in it was its faithful transcript of Nature,² and what seemed best in it realised in Hunt's picture of *The Light of the World*.³ Pater, on the other hand, drew his breath more freely, for that warm air of overwrought, if beautiful sentiment, that blew off the earthly paradise. In an essay, written about this time of his life, suppressed for over

¹ Benson, "Pater," p. 86.

² "Modern Painters," iv. ch. 10, section 21.

³ *Ibid.*, ch. 4, section 20 ; ch. 6, section 8.

twenty years, and then published, only to be again suppressed, he indicates very plainly the charm and the defect of his own way of looking at things :—

“Greek poetry, mediæval or modern poetry, projects above the realities of its time, a world in which the forms of things are transfigured. Of that transfigured world this new (æsthetic) poetry takes possession, and sublimates beyond it another still fainter and more spectral, which is literally an artificial or ‘earthly paradise.’ It is a finer ideal extracted from what in relation to any actual world is already an ideal.”¹

On that earthly paradise—not surely very far-distant from the island of Shalott—he preferred to fix his eyes. Only he never sickened of the shadows.

The essay on “Æsthetic Poetry,” from which the above quotation is taken, is indeed the most intimate thing he ever wrote ; too intimate, we may fancy, to be anything but a source of anxiety to himself. It contains three criticisms suggested by William Morris’s poems which show how closely his own work followed upon that of the pre-Raphaelites.

“The monastic religion of the middle age,” he wrote, “was in fact in many of its bearings like a beautiful disease or disorder of the senses ; and a religion, which is a disorder of the senses, must always be subject to illusions.”²

¹ “Appreciations” (1889 edition), p. 213.

² *Ibid.*, p. 217.

"The choice life of the human spirit is always under mixed lights, and in mixed situations when it is not too sure of itself, is still expectant, girt up to leap forward to the promise."¹

"One characteristic of the pagan spirit the æsthetic poetry has, which is on its surface—the continual suggestion, passive or passionate, of the shortness of life. This is contrasted with the bloom of the world, and gives new seduction to it—the sense of death and the desire of beauty; the desire of beauty quickened by the sense of death."²

Are not these the first thoughts that should enter a mind, at once sympathetic and severe, after reading "Marius the Epicurean"? |

Here, too, in this penetrating essay the author has defined his place among students of history—a place gratefully and delicately accorded by the most meditative of our living historians:³—

"We cannot truly conceive the age: we can conceive the element it has contributed to our culture; we can treat the subjects of that age bringing that into relief. Such an attitude towards Greece, aspiring to but never actually reaching its way of conceiving life, is what is possible for art."⁴

This is perhaps as sound an estimate of the possibilities and limitations of philosophic history as one can ask for. And beside it one may

¹ "Appreciations" (1889), p. 224.

² *Ibid.*, p. 227.

³ Dill, "Roman Society from Nero," pp. 536-537.

⁴ "Appreciations" (1889), p. 224.

place a casual remark of his recorded by Mr Benson :—

“I am quite tired of hearing people for ever talking of the causes which led to the French Revolution; I don't want to know. I am all for details. I want to know how people lived, what they wore, what they looked like.”¹

As good a principle certainly in laying the foundations of a work of artistic history, as the other is good for its superstructure! And for once the critic did not neglect his own maxims. His criticism only fell short, as Ruskin's had done, in knowledge of the technical characteristics of painters. Here he accepted the received opinions, and wove his theories round them. But no student would now, with Pater, attribute the *Medusa* of the Uffizi to Leonardo, any more than, with Ruskin, the *Marriage of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate* to Giotto. And the *Concerto*, on which his estimate of Giorgione is based, is after all an early Titian.²

The volume of “Renaissance Studies,” which were first collected for publication in 1873, is the typical work of this central period of his life as “Plato and Platonism” is of the later. Three things he had learnt from Ruskin: the charm of imaginative prose; how to study and elucidate the meaning of a picture; and the recognition of Leonardo as the truest lover of

¹ Benson, “Walter Pater,” p. 187.

² Berenson, “Venetian Painters of the Renaissance,” p. 123.

beauty in the history of art.¹ In very much else he differed: in liking beautiful things just because they were beautiful; in claiming for each art a separate sphere—that, for example, some ideas were fit for pictorial, and others for lapidary expression;² in an affection for homely, trivial scenes, for *genre*, so that while Ruskin will display Tintoret's *Crucifixion* as the glory of the Venetian School, Pater will lead you quietly to admire the more hidden beauties of the *Concerto*; in a humanism, lavishly appreciative of every fine and curious point of view, and apt to regard religion and morality chiefly as a graceful ornament, supplied to soften the harder lines and harmonise the cruder colours of imaginative work. It was from no uncertain or errant fancy that he fixed upon *La Gioconda*, as the object of the wealthiest and most delicate piece of interpretative criticism that exists in this, or probably in any, language. That strange woman, sitting in her chair beside the waters, bore in her face, as he said, the lineaments alike of the mother of Helen and the mother of Mary; had culled in every garden—in the garden of the soul as in the garden of the earth—every choice and exquisite flower, so that upon her 'all the ends of the world were come.' In her, 'the revealing instance of Leonardo's mode

¹ See "Modern Painters," iv. ch. 3, section 25.

² Cf. "Renaissance Studies," pp. 130, 131, with "Modern Painters," iv. ch. 1, section 15.

of thought and work,' the modern spirit was incarnate—that modern spirit which would draw from every age and climate its most exquisite products, so that the life of art might be fed, like the feast of some Roman epicure, with an endless succession of the rarest dainties.

"A counted number of pulses only," he said in the famous *envoi* of the book, "is given to us of a variegated dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy? To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life."¹

He believed—and his belief is the great defence of his work—that the human spirit, set free to wander amongst all the treasures of the Palace of Art, would prefer those things that were really best, would practise a certain *ascêsis* in judging all the various expressions of each new time-spirit.² Only to bid men burn with this hard gem-like flame was precisely to bid them play with fire.

Illustration of this was not absent from the book itself. The essays on Botticelli and Pico della Mirandola are written with penetrating sympathy, but with the sympathy of a man who has a natural genius for performing the last

¹ "Renaissance Studies," p. 236. ² *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

offices of friendship. Pater's essay has made Botticelli the interpreter of a certain phase in the lives of most men for whom art is in any degree an interpretation of life; of that kind of luxurious melancholy which overtakes highly-strung natures at their first entrance on manhood, as they perceive that they are themselves in Pater's borrowed phrase 'under sentence of death with a sort of indefinite reprieve.' If the warrant for execution were coming on the morrow the situation would be painful; as it is, melancholy draws after it a spurious kind of pleasure, which Shakespeare had long ago made fun of in *As You Like It*, but which, as the world grows older, becomes less of a joke and more of a sombre reality.

Botticelli and Pico were men after Pater's own heart. Wistfulness—the quality so highly rated in "Diaphaneité"—is the characteristic written large by the Florentine painter upon the faces of men and women.¹ A great reader of Dante, Botticelli had become preoccupied—at least so we may fancy—with that band of souls outside the *Inferno*, whom for their infirmity of purpose Heaven cast forth and Hell would not receive.² To his eye they seemed closely to resemble the men and women of his own time, as being unambitious of great decisions, and well content to float with the current rather than to outstrip

¹ "Renaissance Studies," p. 55.

² *Inferno* III.

or baffle it. The face of his Madonnas is always a troubled one; they are oppressed by 'the intolerable honour' that has come to them; they would gladly have made 'the great refusal' if any choice had been left them. It is the same with *Venus Rising Out of the Sea*. The blithe Greek spirit has allured him, as the face of Tito allured Romola, but, as he transfers it to his canvas, it changes, so that, when we look on it at last in the completed picture, the beauty of it is like that of Tito lying at last among the reeds—the beauty of a corpse.

Botticelli in the end came under the spell of the famous Prior of San Marco. Like Michelangelo—like Pascal two centuries later—there came for him a time when

"Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest,
My Soul that turns to His great love on high,
Whose arms to clasp me on the cross were stretched."¹

Pico, a beautiful youth of a great house, had gone the same way some years earlier; had run through many philosophies by the time he was twenty; had effected in his own view a sort of reconciliation between the technical parts of faith and philosophy, and had in the end fallen under that censure of the Church, which not uncommonly overtakes those who endeavour to make a microcosm of their own minds. Yet it was these very conceits in him that attracted Pater.

¹ Symonds' translation of Michelangelo's Poems ("Renaiss. in Italy—The Fine Arts," p. 387).

And in his quaint efforts to adapt Plato's account of creation to the Mosaic cosmogony, his critic finds the troubled workings of a true humanism, a belief that there was in all knowledge, however seemingly chaotic, a kind of ritual or orderliness, which, if men could but apprehend it, would do much to soften and reconcile many crude antagonisms of an imperfect understanding.

Pico had ended by obtaining a papal absolution for his heresies. There was another artist who many centuries before had fallen under the ban of religious paganism, and in the end, as Pater interpreted his work,¹ had wished to make amends for his ill-placed mockeries. Euripides, like his critic, had at one time got some amusement out of the supposed credulities of religious people. In his old age he was sorry for what he had done, and began to suspect that sceptics themselves might be guilty of a kind of absurdity. In such a frame of mind, as Pater supposed, he wrote the "Bacchæ." Pentheus, King of Thebes, young, ardent, and healthily contemptuous of religious enthusiasm, is provoked to fury by the ritualistic excesses of his mother and his grandfather. He takes an oath to suppress the devotions, fair and foul, that are performed in honour of Dionysus. He seizes upon the leader

¹ There are, of course, other interpretations, as Froude's in "Sea Studies" ("Short Studies on Great Subjects") and Gilbert Murray's in "The Athenian Drama—Euripides."

of the Bacchic worship, condemns him in an interview, which has been thought to be like a faint forecast of the most tremendous scene in all history, and throws him into prison. But it is no mortal man that he has to deal with. Dionysus himself has come to Thebes to avenge the dishonour done to the memory of his mother Semele. The house burns from contact with the passive god. Pentheus is seized with a mad folly, dresses himself in the fawn-skin of a Dionysiac votary, and is guided by Dionysus to the hills, where he thinks to spy out the haunts of the frenzied women; and is, of course, in the event, captured and torn to pieces by these furies—Agavê, his mother, at their head. Dionysus withdraws, having vindicated his mother's honour; and to the distracted Agavê, who had questioned it, her reason is restored. The Chorus speaks the famous lines of the epilogue:—

"Many are the shapes of deity and many things beyond expectation the gods accomplish. That which is looked for is not performed, and the god takes unlikely paths as he walks with men. So has it been here."

In an evidently unreal world, where the shadows seem to fall deeper than the lights and to submit so much more easily to artistic treatment, it was well to be at peace with the gods; to deal kindly with the old religions, even when, as Pater thought it was with Christianity, they

seemed to be growing paler and paler, like Leonardo's *Last Supper* in the Refectory of St Mary of the Graces;¹ to carry away what we may each of us be capable of from the mysteries celebrated before us in the spirit of old Greek *μύσται*; to recognise (with the "Ἄγγελος as he looked on the "Bacchæ" at sunrise²) a certain wild beauty and inspiration in even the most extravagant and reckless religious enthusiasm. That was the burden of the advice of Euripides, weighing 'the sum of probabilities' in the serenity of old age, and it was also, perhaps, as fair an estimate of the æsthetic attitude towards religion as we can ask for.

"There are two," says Teiresias to Pentheus,³ "that minister to the wants of mortal men—the son of Semele, who introduced among them the gladdening juice of the grape, and Demeter, who is also called the Earth that gave them bread." These deities, who did not scorn to make themselves known through the medium of what we now reckon the basest of our senses were very much the object of Pater's scrutiny as bringing him into touch with that 'earlier estate of religion, when, as Pausanias fancied, it had been nearer the gods as it was certainly nearer the earth.'⁴

¹ "Renaissance Studies," p. 120.

² ὥστ' εἰ παρῆσθα, τὸν θεὸν τὸν νῦν ψέγεις,
εὐχάμεν ἂν μετῆλθες εἰς· ὃν ἴδε.

("Bacchæ," ll. 712, 713).

³ "Bacchæ," l. 274.

⁴ "Greek Studies," p. 156.

Tracing back the myth of Demeter and Koré with courteous gravity to the early intuitions of the Greek husbandmen (as if with Wordsworth he really believed in a quickened perception of spiritual things among the children of Nature) he follows it through the treatment of the poets until it expands into 'the ethical phase,' into 'that worship of sorrow,' of which the statue of the Demeter of Cnidos in the British Museum is at once the witness and the expression. And as he finds in that famous statue the forerunner of the Mater Dolorosa, so in the spirit of the humanist he draws some curious parallels between the ritual of the Eleusinian mysteries and the ritual of the Christian Church,¹ seeking always, as the test and mirror of truth, as the conclusion of the whole matter, for a feeling in the recesses of the human mind, by which, according to the law of artistic perfection, the form and matter of any spiritual effort, as most evidently in the art of music,² may be transcended and reconciled.

Pater was nearly forty when he wrote the essay on the "Bacchæ," the latest of those we have been considering. It was time for him to write his book—that criticism of life, which every one, who has thought at all, owes to the world. He devoted the next five years to the task. So far he had been a curious explorer, wandering pretty much where he would, living and teaching others

¹ "Greek Studies," p. 123.

² *Cf.* "Renaissance Studies," p. 149.

to live on the goodly heritage of ideas and impressions of which every educated man may make free. This is the *métier* of the essayist, and Pater brought his craft to perfection by the insertion of those vivid personal touches—the fruit of constant self-observation and self-analysis—the absence of which no wealth of erudition can ever atone for. Only Newman, as Lionel Johnson said, had so well known how to speak to the human heart of youth, of death, of little homely things.¹ This was Pater's peculiar talent, and he could not afford to cramp it. Yet, to make his philosophy—his Neo-Cyrenaicism—intelligible, he must present it, not by glimpse and allusion, but concentrated, focussed, embodied.

The task was not an easy one, and he scored a magnificent success. “Marius the Epicurean” is unlike anything else in the English language. It escapes every classification. It is neither novel, nor biography, nor romance, and his own name (selected for some later efforts of the same kind) ‘an imaginary portrait’ is the best that can be found for it. He placed his hero ‘under mixed lights and in mixed situations’ at the collision or conjunction of the Roman Empire and the Christian Church. Marius was one of the lesser nobility in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Of singular sweetness and purity of heart, he was under the necessity of gaining

¹ *Fortnightly Review*, September 1894, p. 355.

the same clarity for his mental vision. His century was just such as Pater loved to write about. The lights above the firmament of established belief had grown dim, and the lamps and candles of philosophy had been set in their place. In the gloom men were catching at shadows. Among the ghosts of the past was one, Aristippus, a disciple of Socrates and the author of a philosophy just the reverse of cynicism. Admitting pleasure and pain to be the criterion of human good plainly indicated by Nature, he urged the importance of extracting from the passing moment its whole stock of pleasant stimulus, mental as well as bodily. Beyond such intimations of the world without as were thus derived, we had, he supposed, no solid or indisputable knowledge upon which to rely. Creatures of a day, we need have no shame in being creatures of circumstance.

Open to obvious abuse in the case of a glutton or a profligate, this doctrine became in the temperate mind of Marius an injunction to seek always the noblest enjoyments afforded by the fleeting hours; became, in fact, a religion of culture as austere and exacting as the self-renunciation of the cynic, although infinitely more elastic and comprehensive. And in default of definite convictions it is hard to conceive a better philosophy of life.

There was one thing in the world of which the

'refined sensation' of the Cyrenaic philosopher had not made the most, had hardly, in fact, made any account at all—that mass of old beliefs, traditions, and moralities, which, under the name of religion served to force men out of an egoistic isolation into a fellowship with one another. In the first flush of youthful excitement, mere feeling, jealously guarded as a sacred trust, had seemed to Marius a sufficient discharge of the purpose of life. In the society and discourse of Cornelius Fronto, the intimate and counsellor of Marcus Aurelius, he began to feel a craving for some partnership in that spiritual state, wider and nobler than great Rome itself, which Fronto seemed to foretell, and where the inhabitants should be just men made perfect. In obvious correspondence, his mind, which until then had found a centre for the shows of the world in his own intellect, began to seek for them another and a higher one. "'Tis in thy power to think as thou wilt," Aurelius had told him; and so, using 'the will as vision,' he came to suppose that the whole material universe might at any moment vanish from his gaze, if it were not constantly supported by an eternal and sympathetic companion, personally interested in his welfare.

In this frame of mind he was one day taken by a friend to the house of a Christian lady. Much that he saw there was new to him, most of all the confident hope of the epitaphs in the

place of burial hard by. The calm sweetness of that afternoon remained with him—an oasis for the eye of the mind in a barren wilderness of thought. He went to Cæcilia's house again, this time at early dawn. It was the hour of the Eucharistic celebration at Christmas. The liturgy, full, perfect, and sufficient, felt its way to the inmost recesses of his mind. It had, as he thought, gathered to itself all the beauty and wisdom of pagan ritual, with much besides that was altogether unearthly and mysterious:—

“Tantum ergo sacramentum
Veneremur cernui:
Et antiquum documentum
Novo cedat ritui.”

His intellect,¹ keen and fastidious beyond the common, had at last been satisfied, and the law of prayer became for him the law of faith. Then, with the finished touch of a great artist, his biographer makes him die before he is actually admitted into the communion of the Church. He had seen the vision of beauty, which he had so earnestly desired, and passed away in sight of, but not within, the promised land. His faith, awoken through his senses, through eye and ear, possessed no power, and the act of quiet heroism, which brought on his death, would have been just as certainly performed if he had never seen the King in his beauty, nor beheld

¹ “Marius the Epicurean,” ii. p. 128.

the land that was still for him very far off. For to the end he was one of 'the wisest of the children of this world,' approaching all things critically, and never losing himself in that *abandon* of unselfish love which is the peculiar glory, as it is surely the peculiar test, of the faithful follower of Christ.

Five years before "Marius the Epicurean" appeared another Platonic book issued from that suburb of Birmingham—Edgbaston—which had been already illuminated by the residence of Newman. Between "John Inglesant" and "Marius," however, the comparison is obvious, but the contrast real. Both were, of course, attempts to meet the need of an age which, as Liddon thought, 'longed to be religious,'¹ and both followed at a greater or less distance in the path of the catholic revival, with a full sense of the mystical beauty of the road. But "Marius" neither had nor deserved to have the success of the other. Though it showed wider study, deeper thought, subtler sensibility, far greater originality of style, it was deficient in the one thing needful. It was not true. It depicted not life, but a pale reflection of it.

John Inglesant had really widened the horizon, had really opened to men a larger view of what life might be. The problems he had to face were real ones, really necessary to be

¹ Liddon, "Some Elements of Religion," p. 1. But he went on to say that this was perhaps too unguarded an assertion.

resolved. And his was a real character, not impossible of imitation by any one who could at all admire and understand it. We can see the evidence of this in the wide range of the book itself. It appealed to Acton¹ and Huxley,² men of as powerfully positive and negative temper as were then alive. It appealed to men of affairs, like Gladstone and Selborne.

But Marius does not seem to have moved one single mind of first-rate eminence. His was 'the light that never was on land or sea,' and his character just an imaginary portrait of what human nature might be, if it had no degrading sins to fight, or ugly suffering to endure—if it were not itself. It was rather, after all, a criticism of Utopia than a criticism of life. Mr Wright has, indeed, discovered the original of Marius in Mr Richard Jackson, at that time a clergyman of advanced views attached to the mission at St Austin's Priory, Walworth, and a connoisseur and collector of rare books. But in the dream-hero every trace of slum life has been removed, and one is uncomfortably aware that Marius would have felt the same horror of mean streets as Pater himself³—would have been as little likely to look for the tragedies of life amongst the rich and the cultured.

"Marius" was followed by four other imaginary

¹ "Letters of Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone," p. 135.

² "Life and Letters of J. H. Shorthouse," i. p. 115.

³ Symonds, *Monthly Review*, September 1906, p. 18.

portraits, which are certainly the most natural products of Pater's genius. Two of them illustrate, carry, one may think, to a logical finish, those two strains in his nature indicated¹ by his acute and friendly critic—the 'strong attraction towards precise and definite forms of beauty,' and the 'strong impulse towards transcendental philosophy,' the 'desire to discern, as far as possible, the absolute principles of life and being.' The sketch of Watteau is slight enough, but the very bareness of it throws the *motif* of the piece into a stronger relief—a character, never too strong but intensely susceptible to graceful and delicate things, drawn on by the seductive charm of a brilliant court, by a very 'lust of the eye,' to be the decorator of a hollow society, and at last to reflect it in the fretful, unsatisfied glitter of his own rapid, half-contemptuous work.

"Sebastian van Storck," suggested no doubt by Amiel's *Journal*, is an exchange of 'the colour or curve of a rose-leaf for . . . that colourless, formless, intangible being Plato put so high.'² The beautiful Dutch boy is haunted by a yearning after those cold, clear peaks of thought, where reason sits wrapped in an abstraction so intense that the world, with all its shows, has no interest for her any more; for that spot, to which Parmenides pointed long ago, where all

¹ Benson, "Pater," pp. 11 and 12.

² "Appreciations," p. 68.

things are brought to a unity, and the life of active service sinks or deepens into an impersonal contemplation.¹ There is the Nemesis of intellect; for those who come there lose all interest in, all capacity for, this world, and die of a kind of mental inanition from the very completeness of their victory over passion. Pater has given his diagnosis with the appalling realism of one who has himself had something of an escape. The brilliant colours of the staging only throw into greater contrast the mortal coldness of the protagonist. For Sebastian — like Amiel, like Merimée — is the finished victim of his own fastidious taste. All human delights—the home life just at that time coming to self-consciousness in Dutch painting, the fresh bloom of early womanhood, the prospect of a brilliant career, the material comfort of a luxurious fortune, seem to him trivial, almost vulgar. Even the life of a sea-dog among compatriots grown great on the water, or the life of self-abandonment in the solitude of a cloister (both of them at one moment very fascinating to that curious mind) evaporate at last before the overmastering desire to find the one absolute stable essence of Being, by virtue of which he himself *is* together with all persons and things of which he is sensible. An idealist by instinct, a pantheist by conviction, he petrifies in the midst of all the

¹ *Cp.* "Plato and Platonism," pp. 40, 41.

love and wealth that surround him. Reality—in the sense of reunion with God (considered as an intellectual abstraction)—being altogether desirable, and yet here altogether unattainable, Death becomes the perfect good, and is thought of only as the quickest road to truth. So he perishes gladly, and, as it chances beautifully, in saving the life of a child.

Whilst the "Imaginary Portraits" were appearing, Pater had begun to occupy one of that row of houses in Earl's Terrace facing Holland Park, which are now under sentence of death. He appears to have found Oxford cramping,¹ and his keen sensibility had not missed the strange charm of London 'in the heavy glow of summer.'² Nor is it fanciful to connect this change of outlook with a change in the inner point of view, visible in some of the reviews, which about this time he began to contribute to the *Guardian*. Slowly, and with lapses, but very certainly, he began to advocate the recall of art to the service of the Church, and at the same time to busy himself with the disciplinary value of faith, and more than ever with the thoughts of death. We may date this last phase of his life perhaps from the essay on "Sir Thomas Browne," written in 1886, and trace it through the essay on "Style" until it reaches

¹ Wright, "Life of Pater," ii. p. 41.

² "Marius the Epicurean," ii. p. 17.

its final, scarcely expected, fulfilment in "Plato's Æsthetics."¹ And it is a consciousness of this great change in himself which explains that otherwise cryptic remark that 'if there was anything of his that had a chance of surviving, it was his Plato'²; Plato being exactly one of those who had passed from a too sensuous love of visible things to 'a certain penitential colour of fancy and expression.'³ This temperate habit of mind—this true *ascêsis*—is advanced in the "Plato" as a condition of membership in the perfect state, as a discipline to which art must conform to be made perfect, and appears in the essay on "Style," as an injunction to do all to the glory of God. And that pathetic half-line about imagination being a malady, which closed the unfinished essay on Pascal, and came to the world as a word from the grave, was, for all we can tell, the last confession of one to whom imagination had once meant very much indeed.

Pater had not severed his connection with Brasenose when he abandoned historical work, and there was no doubt, whatever temporary disgusts he might experience, that his proper sphere was in an academy. In 1893 he gave up his London house and took another in St Giles', Oxford, in addition to his college rooms. The President of Magdalen has described his appear-

¹ In "Plato and Platonism."

² Benson, "Pater," p. 162.

"Plato and Platonism," the chapter on the "Genius of Plato."

ance about this time—his ‘pale face, strong jaw, heavy, chopped, German moustache, tall hat, apple-green tie’ and laboured walk, giving an impression of pain.¹ The sands, indeed, though he did not know it,² were running out. At Brasenose they noticed as a curious trait how stern an advocate of compulsory chapel for undergraduates he had become.³ His own Sunday attendance there had long been invariable,⁴ and he began to confine his general reading within the limits of the Bible, the Prayer-Book, and Bute’s translation of the Breviary.⁵ He was, it is likely, growing to be acutely sensible of that ‘homelessness’ of the human soul in the world, of which he speaks in the essay on “Sir Thomas Browne,”⁶ and took full advantage of the passionate, if subdued, ritual of the Church in order to allay his suffering. Still deep in his nature there lay ‘a certain untamed scepticism,’⁷ as Mr Benson calls it, which is very apparent in his thoughts about Pascal. It was, after all, upon the patterns of the heavenly things that he had looked, not upon the heavenly things themselves. He died suddenly and painlessly on 30th July 1894. “Whatsoever things are true, and honest, and

¹ Benson, “Pater,” pp. 174, 175.

² Wright, “Life of Pater,” ii. p. 215.

³ Buchan, “Brasenose College,” p. 139.

⁴ Benson, “Pater,” p. 84.

⁵ Wright, “Life of Pater,” p. 201.

⁶ “Appreciations,” p. 137.

⁷ Benson, “Pater,” p. 26.

pure," they wrote on his tablet in Brasenose. They might have added and with greater truth, "*ὅσα προσφιλῆ*," "whatsoever things are lovely."

As in religion he had always followed the form and colour rather than the reality of things, so of his work it is rather the qualities than the thoughts that will remain. It is not by any means that there is no substance in his writing. Those who have travelled over the same ground, have borne witness to the accuracy of his observation, to the historic value of many a sentence that seems as if tuned only for the ear of the musician. But facts with him are so little solid accretions possessed of the primary qualities, are so completely absorbed into the ideas of the writer, that at the end of each passage a man feels as he does at the end of a piece of music, unable to give an account of what has delighted him. And thus Pater's writing does in a great measure realise his conception of high art—the condition of music. And it is because he is thus determinedly metaphysical, because his reason is resolutely enthroned above the stream of consciousness, that his sympathy is so immobile and his style possesses that endless languor, which, as he might have said himself, is like the slow movement of a summer stream when the skies are dark and louring overhead, and the air heavy with a thousand scents. All things are tuned to a solemn suspense, and appear lazily expectant ;

only the water-flies skip playfully and make little ripples on the surface of the water. But the thunder never breaks, and the delicious drowsy afternoon never dies.

And it is this unique style, unlike anything that has been in English literature, or may probably ever be again, which makes him difficult to write about, because it is hardly possible to give any true representation of his ideas without adopting his manner, so entirely consistent were the expression and the substance of his thoughts. It was, in fact, a point of view from which to look at life rather than a pathway across it at which he aimed, and this in itself would have separated him from the mass of his fellow-creatures. Like Landor, and with even better reason, he might have said: "I shall dine late, but the dining-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select."¹ For amongst men of culture his religious position is sometimes adopted; a communion of ritual that shall overrule the distinctions of faith confidently anticipated; and the Christian religion more generally exchanged for the beauties of Christianity than we care to recognise.

¹ Colvin, "Landor," p. 3.

AUTHORITIES

In preparing this article, I have used the 1904 edition of Pater's works.

There are biographies of Pater by Mr A. C. Benson in the Englishmen of Letter Series and by Mr Wright. The former is written from the academic standpoint, and with the aid of information supplied by Pater's University friends; the latter contains some curious and some unimportant detail about Pater's other friends. As Pater never mixed his friendships, Mr Wright's book is an important, if not very pleasant, source of information. There is also a short biography of Pater by Ferris Greenslet.

Of the numerous articles that have been written about him, Mr Gosse's in "Critical Kit-Kats" is the most important. The others include Lionel Johnson's in the *Fortnightly Review*, September 1894; Professor Dowden's in the *Atlantic*, No. 90, p. 112; Mr Arthur Symonds' in the *Monthly Review*, September 1906, and Mr Edward Hutton's in the same magazine for September 1903.

LORD MORLEY OF BLACKBURN

1838 —

Lord Morley—Politics and religion—Newman's definition of Liberalism—Liberalism as it appears to-day—Liberal and Catholic ideals contrasted—Mill—The enthusiasm of liberty—The Encyclopædists—The benefits of Liberalism—Its superficiality—In the society of the French Liberals, Diderot, Helvetius Holbach, Rousseau, Turgot, Condorcet, Voltaire; Lord Morley's debt to them. Points of resemblance—Utilitarianism the basis of Liberalism—Conscience up to date—Some Nemeses of Utilitarianism—"On Compromise"—The unseen foundations of society undermined by Liberalism—The meaning of aristocracy—Gladstone and Ruskin—Lecky on Democracy—The 'scientific' politician of the future—The Toryism of the past—Lord Morley's "Burke"—Lord Morley's views on religion—The religion of science—Doubt and conviction—Lord Morley in public life—The Irish Secretariate—Lord Morley's later books on men of affairs: Machiavelli; Cromwell; Gladstone—Lord Morley as a historian—Scientific history fatalist in tendency—The moralities, insisted upon by Lord Morley, inconsistent with it—Effect of strong moral emotion on Lord Morley's style—His resemblance to Lucretius in temper of mind—His satire—Newman once more.

"Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and saint and heard great argument
About it and about; but evermore
Came out by the same door as in I went."

—*Omar Khayyam.*

WHEN the false gods, according to Mrs Browning's fancy,¹ fell moaning off their golden seats, there

¹ E. B. Browning, "The Dead Pan."

was assuredly one who refused to render up her deity. Nemesis is a goddess whom the advances of civilisation have not availed to disturb. She sits meting out her judgments from age to age, and, like death itself, with impartial if sometimes tardy tread, crosses the threshold of the rich man's castle and the poor man's hut. With all men she has her word, but chiefly with those of strong opinions and determined assertion of them, whether they be theologians or poets, financiers or journalists. It is in the fortunes of statesmen, however, that her writs run most legibly, and in the England of to-day there is no instance of this more striking than the career of Lord Morley. Behind him lies a life so consistent that any man might be proud of it. He has very seldom recanted an opinion or abandoned a principle. Yet the fact remains that he, the philosophic Liberal, the Little Englander, the ardent advocate of Home Rule, the persistent foe of war and coercion, the convinced champion of free discussion, is closing his fine record of public service, with a coronet on his head, as the ruler of India, of the child of Clive and Hastings, of the creature of strife and fraud; as, one might say, a benevolent despot in an absolute constitution, imposed and administered by an alien race. The political and parliamentary history of this century and the last will certainly not be the poorer for the singular presence of

Lord Morley in the world of affairs, and romance, ill able to breathe in an atmosphere of science and democracy and for over fifty years wearing out its existence in a long decay, will clutch at a figure whose personality did very much in its time to relieve the Commons of their commonness.

All politics run back into religion. "The usurpations of reason," as Newman thought, "may be dated from the Reformation."¹ Independence of the Pope brought men at last to be independent of the King. Thomas Cromwell was the proper ancestor of Oliver; Holbach and Rousseau begat Chaumette and Robespierre. The Protestants of the sixteenth century were as surely the parents of nineteenth century freethinkers, as it is sure that handsome parents may have children whose looks belie their parentage. Liberalism, as Newman defined it, is "false liberty of thought or the exercise of thought upon matters, in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue, and therefore is out of place."² Among such matters, he said, were first principles of any kind; and he felt Lacordaire, Montalembert, and the school of Catholic Liberals to be deeply illogical.³

We have glanced at Liberalism with the eyes

¹ "Oxford University Sermons," p. 69.

² "Apologia," p. 288.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

of the author of the "Apologia." We are now to try to take our stand on the other side of the hill, and see it with the eyes of one who has been the biographer of Cromwell, Voltaire, Diderot, Cobden, Gladstone, and as many more. The present moment is, indeed, one of peculiar interest. Liberalism in any intelligible sense cannot last another generation. Lord Morley embodies more than any living man the principles of a school of thought that is fast dying out. In a score of years the strange adventure upon which the nations of Europe embarked in 1789 will be concluded, and we shall revert, doubtless with many and formidable changes, to an earlier type. The principles of unchecked individual liberty and unrestricted competition have, to use the ancient phrase, been tried in the balance and found wanting. The golden dreams, which so lately cheated the anxious eyes of men, have tarnished with time. Their splendour has proved illusive, and they have gone the way of other philosophies down a road upon which there is no returning. Gradgrind and Bounderby have after all been found to be no better members of society than noble lords with long lineages and loose lives; not so generous, not so easy-going. King Log, as we know, was in the end preferred to King Stork. Gods and men alike are incurably fond of jesting, and we have to be careful. Crassus lived for gold, but he got more

of it by dying, for the Parthians stuffed his mouth with it. The old aristocrats have been swept away, and some malicious spirit has given us new ones, bathed *à la Kilmansegg* in the most material sort of golden splendour. And Misery, Vice, and Discontent stalk among the drudges of society, much as they did before.

This is Liberalism as it appears to most of us, Tories or Socialists, to-day. But we are to put the clock back and look at it as it appeared in the 'fifties, just when, as Lord Morley says, the 'star of Newman' had set, and 'the sun of Mill' was high in the heavens.¹ To Newman the earth seemed to show the spectacle of a world for all time at hopeless variance with its Maker;² to Mill also it was barren land, but land where, if only unrestricted competition — *la carrière ouverte aux talents*—was introduced, the fir and the myrtle would replace the thorn and the briar. The distinction is profound, searching, dividing the very joints and marrow, for it makes all the difference in the world whether we say "*Ora et labora*" or "*Labora*" simply. Works, we argue, seeking to bridge over the gulf, are the best prayers. Possibly! only it is not a little remarkable that we are the first generation that has thought so.

Newman discussed the question with customary courage and perspicuity in his "Difficulties of

¹ "On Compromise," p. 115.

² "Apologia," p. 241.

Anglicans considered.”¹ Catholicism was commonly condemned on account of the unprogressive state of Catholic countries. There ecclesiastics were at a premium ; telegraphs, railroads, commerce at a discount. The result was, or was alleged to be, poverty, insecurity, and a vast army of mendicants, lay as well as spiritual. The reply he gave was one which had at least the merit of a lofty ancestry. The Catholic Church was possessed, he said, by one idea—“that sin is the enemy of the soul.” The eternal welfare or loss of one single human being, sunk in crime or degradation, was of greater consequence to her than a hundred lines of railroad, or the sanitation of whole cities, except so far as these promoted some spiritual good beyond them. Many publicans and harlots, he suggested, many criminals purged by one last act of contrition, would enter the kingdom of heaven before statesmen of excellent parts, worthy virtues, and brilliant records.² The cancer of society, eating at its vitals, was chiefly and in every age moral evil, a wrong attitude of the soul towards its Creator. The true philanthropist was he who devoted himself to keep it under—more than that he could never do—by the means of grace, Prayer and the Sacraments.

Mill set his face in another direction. The

¹ “Difficulties of Anglicans,” i. p. 240.

² “Apologia,” p. 249.

cancer of society, he said in effect, was physical evil. Physical evil would respond to human remedies. Men and women appeared to him just starved in mind and body. The road of prosperity was increased production of wealth. The road to knowledge was free discussion. In the wake of knowledge would follow wisdom. Let the authority of governments, spiritual or temporal, be rated henceforth at the lowest; let every soul be as little subject to the higher powers as possible; let every man make his life in his own way, restrained by the community only where his conduct was directly injurious to another; let opportunities be equalised; let the cleverest men get to the top—and the world would be regenerate.

The great difficulty nowadays in reading Mill is to appreciate the enthusiasm which lay behind that ice-cold gospel. But Lord Morley was extremely sensible of it, and his own nervous, emotional English is the measure of its force. And we may not do amiss to place ourselves for a few minutes among that earlier band of Liberals who were accustomed to meet round Holbach's table at Grandval, and in whose society, it may well be, as Lord Morley suggests, we might best choose to pass a day, if, as by some magic wishing-carpet, we could be carried back into the middle period of the eighteenth century.¹

¹ "Diderot," i. p. 260.

In the freshness of their conversation, in their boundless faith in the future of the race, in their keen delight in intellectual toil, their hatred of ecclesiastical tyranny, their belief in thought and individuality as the great regenerators, their courage in face of opposition, we can hear, as nowhere else, the heart-beat of Liberalism, quick and strong as that of a young man in his prime. If it be asked, now that mists and visions have cleared away, what solid gain these men brought to humanity, three things would have especially to be named. In the first place, and one may add in the second place and in the third place, a conviction that religious persecution is of all kind of tyranny the most wicked and religious conformity of all kind of equivocation the most degrading—both of them entirely valueless in promoting religion and morally disastrous to all who promote them. And there is no one, we may safely assume, among those who care for the future of the Christian religion to-day that would not echo the sentiment of Pastor Allamand, when he declared that he would give sixteen quarto volumes of his sermons to have written one single line of Voltaire's "*Traité sur la Tolérance*"—"Si vous voulez ressembler à Jésus Christ, soyez martyrs, et non pas bourreaux."¹

In the next place Liberalism brought with it an effective desire to enter into the wisdom of

¹ Voltaire, "*Traité sur la Tolérance*," p. 155.

Nature ; to make of the earth a field of corn rather than a field of battle ; to treat it no longer as a slave, but as a friend, in whose fortunes men were deeply and congenitally interested. And in the wake of this there came a sense of the splendour of the universe as a physical system, of the insignificance of man beside it, of his infinite ignorance, of the petty frivolity of most of his concerns, not least, perhaps, of some of his ecclesiastical concerns.

It is true that in the width of the prospect that opened before them, the Encyclopædists forgot altogether that man is the measure of all things ; that the spirit of man remained, and must remain, untouched, incalculable, the subject of a history more tragic and more splendid than any Nature can suggest. No one of them probably ever turned over the pages of Butler's "Analogy" to learn that ignorance is as good an argument for religion as for scepticism. Because they felt no sort of interest in a religion so overlaid with convention as current Catholicism, it escaped their notice that the dogmas which they ridiculed were an attempt, doubtless imperfect, to preserve for the intellect the religious experiences of One, Who at the lowest was the greatest moral expert the world had ever seen. Nor could they be expected to perceive that the past has its reason as well as the present ; that its convictions require

the same reverence from us as ours may one day stand in need of from our descendants; that the emancipation of mankind in the eighteenth century, boisterous and cruel even when it came, could never have been attempted at all but for the long discipline of centuries which had taught men to hold together even when they differed. Least of all could they be required to draw fine but precious distinctions; to perceive that while persecution is always bad, intolerance of vice and of the opinions which promote vice is the life-blood of a healthy society; that what is called broad-mindedness is often just no more than not knowing what you think yourself and not caring what other people think. In a license of opinion, strong words continue to be used, but strong convictions are often out of reach.

Of this last fault Lord Morley, indeed, least perhaps of living statesman, is guilty, but he has inherited along with their virtues some other of the defects of the Encyclopædists. On that very account his is the best of introductions into their society. One of them, who appears a little rougher than the rest, he holds in very particular esteem, and it is plain that this affectionate intimacy arises from a common width of horizon, a fondness for speculating upon certain ultimate matters concerning society, above all from a persistent determination to regard nothing as truth that does not permit of immediate intellectual

demonstration. On enquiry we learn that we are face to face with Diderot, the very focus of the rationalistic thought of the day, the father of that religion of science in which our guide so passionately believes. Hard by are stationed Helvétius and Holbach, the one so indiscreet—so Madame du Deffand declared—as to have let out everybody's secret, and the other so much the reverse as to have kept secret the authorship of the best abused book in literature. "De l'Esprit" suggested to Bentham, the principle of utility as the standard of action, and went on to declare 'everybody's secret'—that selfishness always and in every case is the motive of action. "Le Système de Nature," was the boldest possible assertion that we, with all that we see and feel, are just transient modes of matter.

Our sponsor, faithful to his golden rule that we should have preferences but no exclusions,¹ will place us next before a solitary, mournful figure whom he addresses with some reserve and constraint. This, he tells us, is Rousseau—a sentimental dreamer, a writer whose spring of action is not the head but the heart, unpractical, much given to egotism and self-observation, yet the master of a style which makes him the very prophet of human suffering and sorrow. We may have met, he adds, with the same sort of person in England. Carlyle is the English

¹ "Studies in Literature," p. 72.

Rousseau.¹ They are dangerous people, these poets who take prose for the vehicle of their ideas, lull reason to sleep, and play on the emotions and prejudices of mankind. They make "thought an aspiration, justice a sentiment, and society a retrogression."² We need to beware of them.

But there are better men than Rousseau outside the charmed circle at Grandval. Turgot and Condorcet are not merely thinkers, but men of affairs—always a recommendation with Lord Morley. From the one our guide learnt to observe a temper of mind in dealing with revolutionary material, which, one may venture to suspect, has not been without value at the India Office. With the other he has more instinctive sympathy. Condorcet's boundless belief in the unchained spirit of man; his affection for natural history because of the buffets it incidentally deals at Moses;³ his uncommunicative reserve, which made Diderot speak of him as 'a volcano covered with snow,' are, or at least were, not uncongenial characteristics. Lord Morley's writing has about it, too, that aristocratic fashion, which makes ill company for the *bonnets-rouges* and *sans-culottes* of every age, and shows how difficult it is for educated Liberals to make in practice any heartfelt acceptance of democracy. A world thoroughly democratic would, indeed, have little soil nor space where such high growths

¹ "Miscellanies," i. p. 147.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, ii. p. 176.

of culture as his own works could come to maturity. This is no piece of theory. Let anyone look at the literature or art of the France or America of to-day and then judge.

He resembles Condorcet in another point—a deep veneration for Voltaire, or at least for his principles, and what Condorcet said of Voltaire might, with the proper emendations, be said of himself:—

“L'exemple de l'Angleterre lui montrait que la vérité n'est pas faite pour rester un secret entre les mains de quelques philosophes et d'un petit nombre de gens du monde instruits, ou plutôt endoctrinés par les philosophes; riant avec eux des erreurs dont le peuple est la victime, mais s'en rendant eux-mêmes les défenseurs, lorsque leur état ou leurs places leur y fait trouver un intérêt chimérique ou réel, et prêts à laisser proscrire ou même à persécuter leurs précepteurs s'ils osent dire ce qu'eux-mêmes pensent en secret. Dès ce moment Voltaire se sentit appelé à détruire les préjugés de toute espèce dont son pays était l'esclave.”¹

More than this, Voltaire is admirable because

“he is, perhaps, the one great Frenchman who has known how to abide in patient contentment with an all but purely critical reserve, leaving reconstruction, its forms, its modes, its epoch, for the fulness of time and maturity of effort to disclose.”²

Lord Morley thinks him great because he was

¹ Condorcet, “Vie de Voltaire,” p. 20.

² “Voltaire,” p. 38.

content to try to destroy and did not try to build. We may wonder, perhaps, if any Liberal has ever been great any other way. Then he finds in Voltaire the true model for all time of the man of letters, whose special art it is to show 'the ideas of all subjects in the double light of the practical and the spiritual reason.'¹ Again, Voltaire was the master-spirit of the only reformation which was wholly non-ascetic, which was moved always by appealing to reason, never to passion,² which cared nothing for the dark chastity³ of the Middle Ages. Nor can it be quite by chance that the study of Voltaire was written when the author was just verging on thirty-three, 'that earlier climacteric, when the men with vision first feel conscious of a past, and reflectively mark its shadow.'⁴

We are done with the Encyclopædists, and may return for a moment to Mill. There were two effects of his scheme of social salvation, which were insufficiently foreseen. One, which has given Lord Morley no little trouble, was that, if an increased accumulation of material wealth be set before society as the road to improvement,⁵ those will be reckoned the wisest citizens who are readiest at making money. Happiness in terms of very material comfort will, as Carlyle saw, come more and more to be substituted for the 'blessedness,' which despite all their vice

¹ "Voltaire," p. 117.

² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 152, "The mediæval superstition about chastity."

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁵ "On Compromise," p. 34.

and brutality did represent the goal of all the ardent spirits of the Middle Age. The other effect was an almost complete loss of corporate feeling, whether spiritual or temporal. Men were converted by their habit of mind into so many atoms or units, consciously busy with enlightened selfishness, and unconsciously busy with selfish enlightenment. Matters got so bad at last that Leslie Stephen set to work to mend the utilitarian creed. Sympathy was present, he said, in the instinctive unavoidable effort of mankind to realise each other's feelings.¹ A wholly unsympathetic man was an idiot, and, as we narrowed our sympathies, we became progressively 'idiotic.'²

This new utilitarianism, if a strict inquisition were held, might cost the country something considerable in asylums. Abuse, besides, one has always to remember, well deserved as it may be, is not argument. Napoleon was supremely selfish, supremely unsympathetic. Was he in any intelligible sense an idiot?

We are not primarily concerned, however, with Mill or Stephen, close allies as they were of Lord Morley. Yet one cannot be at too much pains to contrast the utilitarian morality, never long dissociated from the Liberal creed, with the phrase of thought which preceded it. Conscience with Newman had been a golden

¹ "Science of Ethics," p. 221.

² *Ibid.*, p. 244.

chain led down from Heaven by God. Mill 'the saint of rationalism'¹ took it for 'a subjective feeling in the mind' (though how feeling in the mind could be other than subjective it is hard to see²) and, thus transformed, made it the sanction of the new morality. A good deal evidently depended on the standard. Newman's standard has been the life of Christ. Mill said you could hardly have a better one,³ but Christ's Person, like the phenomenon of conscience, had lost for him its divine origin. Therefore it appeared safer to reconstitute society with the aid of Bentham's formula about 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number.' Whether Lord Morley has found the new sanction and the new standard less nebulous than the old ones one may venture to doubt. To the present writer his pages seem constantly to show a heart higher than his confession of faith. Thus, for example, if you really believe in 'the greatest happiness' principle, and also (as Lord Morley does) in democracy (which is as much as to say that men are the best judges of their own interests) it is hard to see, in the event of your being outvoted, on what principle you continue to exhort mankind to choose the more excellent way. How much more reasonable to accept the

¹ Morley, "Miscellanies," iv. p. 146.

This is a criticism of Leslie Stephen's in "The English Utilitarians."

³ "Essays on Religion," p. 255.

popular verdict and exalt it into a divine decree, like the flotsam adventurer of politics who knows well enough on which side his bread is buttered but hardly at all which side his coat is turned! Or take the circumstances of the downfall of the Second Empire which Lord Morley, in the temper if not the language of a Hebrew prophet, bids us regard as a proof that morality is 'the nature of things.'¹ In all fairness and reason then one might argue, if the French to be beaten had a monopoly of crime, the Germans, to have won so fine a success, must have had more than the average of virtue. And yet Lord Morley is not going to tell us that the Silesian wars and the Ems telegram, on which more than any other things the supremacy of Prussia has been founded, were anything but the vilest instruments of ambition, bound with iron and stained with blood. Or, whilst we are about it, take the whole principle of international morality by which Lord Morley sets so much store, and consider the unification of Italy in the light of the means by which it was obtained—the greatest happiness of the greatest number of Italians effected by Cavour at the cost of a little Sardinian blood in the Crimean War, and the cession to France of his countrymen in Savoy and Nice. The utilitarian calculus works out the same answer as the doctrines of Machiavelli and the alleged doctrines

¹ "On Compromise," p. 25.

of the Jesuits. ‘Reason of state,’ ‘the end justifying the means’ — these were after all the principles by which the great ‘progressive’ developments of the nineteenth century have been obtained. Yet Lord Morley decries ‘reason of state’ with a severity, which would not ill become one who held Newman’s doctrine of sin.

His counsels have, indeed, been greater than his creed from start to finish. In an early treatise “On Compromise,” of which the motto is “It makes all the difference in the world whether we put Truth in the first place or in the second place,” his moral fervour glows and scorches with deep-set passion. The writer sets out to find the boundary between ‘wise suspense in forming opinions’ and ‘disingenuousness and self-illusion,’ between ‘wise reserve in expressing opinions’ and ‘voluntary dissimulation,’ between ‘wise tardiness in trying to realise them’ and ‘indolence and pusillanimity’ in neglecting the attempt. Compromise, as we are all aware, is dear to the English mind. It has made of the English constitution a model of excellence. It has made of the English people a governing race. It has smoothed away innumerable difficulties, and added vastly to the sum of human comfort, and therefore presumably to the sum of human happiness. To stick to your father’s opinions and have no dealings with logic is not uncommonly

an effect of English public-school education. But Lord Morley has a way of pressing inconvenient questions, hardly less urgent than Newman's. Equally intolerant of convention, he was equally exasperated by Hume, who, after all, had only expressed with unusual cynicism the opinions which are commonly held by educated people. The philosopher, in giving advice to a young man who wanted a benefice, and felt some difficulty in signing the Thirty-nine Articles, had reproached himself for not having practised hypocrisy in this particular.

“The common duties of society usually require it, and the ecclesiastical profession only adds a little more to an innocent dissimulation, or rather simulation, without which it is impossible to pass through the world.”¹

With this sort of thing Lord Morley will have no truce. His book is throughout an untiring rebuke to those who adopt the conventional path of easy compromise; the tone of it stimulating, trenchant, thorough, very foreign to an age which is more ready to ask a question than to stay for the answer. No one, who reads it intelligently and who can be quit of political or religious bias, will lay it down without finding that he has been undergoing a very severe cross-examination. The moral conclusion arrived at is as characteristic of the writer as it is strikingly

¹ Quoted in “On Compromise,” p. 88.

enforced. Whatever restraint a consideration for the convictions, prejudices, or traditions of other men may impose upon any attempt to realise opinion in practical form, whatever reserve courtesy may here or there place upon the free expression of our thoughts, the formation of opinion on all topics as much of future as of present interest ought to go on unchecked, unhindered, unembarrassed. On the free production and commerce of new ideas in short all the moral prospects of society depend.¹

If the author had not so firm a faith that 'morality is the nature of things,' he might have hesitated to advocate so tremendous a gamble. What, if a people imperfectly educated in judgment (as a people for mere lack of leisure must always be) should first throw over the restraints of religion, and then the restraints of government, should think itself into bombs, outrage and sedition, even when it is controlled by rulers eminently wise, disinterested and beneficent. Has not a plenitude of free discussion, like a plenitude of authority, a Nemesis prepared for it? To warn us, as Mill did, not to suppress anybody of apparently anarchical or dangerous opinion, because in so doing we may inadvertently or blindly fight, like the Pharisees, against the powers of light, is to invite men to a cowardly evasion of those very responsibilities

¹ "On Compromise," pp. 96, 97.

which the keepers of the public conscience ought to be required to face. Bolingbroke, with his ideas of a patriot king and a national party had surely a truer eye for the genius of government than those who look for it in an interminable chaos of opinion. A society which would make progress something more than a word 'to mystify the millions' would be one in which argument, and especially political argument, was ever narrowing to a point ; in which first principles, and second principles, too, in religion, in politics, in art, as well as in science, were established beyond dispute, and all minds were tending in the same direction. It was because this ideal had been largely attained in the Middle Ages, that they produced, as Lord Morley sees, a higher type of character than is at present within our reach ;¹ that amid all their ignorance and brutality they contrived to raise monuments, which are as much our despair as our admiration. It would not, indeed, be hard with a little dexterous juggling of the utilitarian standard to vindicate those who refused facilities to religious doubt and denial. For Liberalism has failed in the sphere of religion, as it has failed in the sphere of government, and will leave behind no positive faith, unless it be the faith of the children of Israel when every man had his own priest and his own Levite. If we refuse to acclaim that state of the

¹ "On Compromise," p. 36.

Roman world, which Gibbon applauded,¹ when all modes of worship were considered by the people as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, and by the magistrate as equally useful, we cannot safely do so on Liberal or utilitarian principles (of the consequence of which, indeed, it is an excellent illustration), but because common conviction is the vital spark of every nation and every society. To keep that sacred fire alive is the eternal problem of the statesman. The Middle Ages rested upon a theory of governance ecclesiastical and civil, which they believed to be of divine appointment. To question it was heresy or treason. As religion had an absolute sanction, so it was absolutely enforced. Protestantism wrecked the theory, and Liberalism the practice. In destructive power Liberalism had no rival, but it had the defects of its qualities and built up nothing at all. Advanced thought in civil matters turned to Socialism, for which Rousseau had already laid a mythical foundation in the common brotherhood of man. As faith in a heaven where wrongs would be righted, and the lion lie beside the lamb, faded from the common stock of beliefs, the Sermon on the Mount was dragged from its spiritual setting, and crudely interpreted as communism. The sane socialism of the Middle Ages, which had meant so much to Carlyle and Froude, grew

¹ "Decline and Fall," ch. ii. (vol. i. p. 28.)

into a fanciful reconstruction of society on a basis of equality, and the dignity of labour came to mean the indignity of intellect. *Post hoc sed non propter hoc*. These things followed Liberalism in fact, but not in thought. Diderot and Voltaire, Cobden and Mill and Gladstone were accustomed to contemplate with more or less complacency the existence of a set of privileged persons, and Lord Morley followed in their wake. The difficulty lay, has always lain, in the formation of this class. We read of an interview between Gladstone and Ruskin, when the latter attacked his host as 'a leveller,' whereupon Gladstone replied, "Oh, dear no; I am nothing of the sort. I am a firm believer in the aristocratic principle—the rule of the best. I am an out-and-out inequalitarian."

"The true question," comments Lord Morley, "against Ruskin's and Carlyle's school of thought was how you are to get the rule of the best. Mr Gladstone thought freedom was the answer. What path the others would have us tread, neither Ruskin nor his stormy teacher ever intelligibly told us."¹

This is hardly fair. In the civilised world there have been suggested, one may say, four methods of forming a governing class. The first, which met with Carlyle's approval, was that of education. A man was brought up to command, was given such a tincture of learn-

¹ "Life of Gladstone," ii. p. 582.

ing as the times allowed, was required to be courageous, self-controlled, indifferent to money, to have a regard for the tradition of his class and family, and a chivalrous respect for women and sufferers. There were other things, but these were the chief. In some cases the education succeeded, in some it failed. But the notion of it was that a man with fine feelings was the best man of all.

The second method, which is Lord Morley's, is that of instruction. A man full of knowledge is supposed to be the wisest of men. Competitive examinations in subjects, more or less useful, perform the services and receive the honour accorded in early societies to the casting of lots, and the Chinese become, as Voltaire supposed them, some of the most favoured of mortals. The English civil servants in India, indeed, are often reckoned the glory of this system; but owing to difference of birth and education between them and the people they govern, they would be much more properly regarded as hereditary aristocrats.

The third method, which tends in western societies to override this one, is the plutocratic. Rich men govern the country by virtue of a more or less honourable use of their riches. They have hard heads, and not infrequently hard hearts, and owe their position in this country more to Mill and Cobden than any other two persons.

The latest method of obtaining a governing class is from the ranks of the sufferers. The people, who have neither education, instruction, or wealth, have, at least, as Aristotle pointed out, the great advantage of knowing where the shoe pinches. A labour-party, if it often recommends a quack medicine, is likely to have pretty quick fingers for a diagnosis of the complaint. The phantom economic man of Mill's fancy, who needed only to be left alone to make the best of himself, has dissolved into the sturdy artisan clamouring for state regulation, sometimes for state control. History, revolving on its axis, is showing us the same side of the wheel once again, and in our efforts to solve the social problem we are going to revert to the solution of the Middle Ages; this time with democracy to hurry our steps and a swelling population to confuse them. Anyway, and that is all with which we are here concerned, Liberalism, Gladstonian, or Cobdenite has disappointed the public hopes, and the fairy city of the Economists, paved with gold and freedom, has come tumbling about our heads.

This is not to deny that it has worked an obvious measure of public good. Any one, indeed, to criticise it effectively, must have deeply pondered the case of the man whose last state is described as being worse than his first. There is a moment in all political development

when change looks like improvement, when the abode once haunted by a devil is swept and garnished. But, as Lord Morley somewhere says himself, politics is one long second best. Benevolent despotisms and benevolent democracies are both of them better in theory than any system of weights and balances. Plato preferred the one, and Rousseau the other, and, if men could be trusted, we might adopt either with indifferent ease. But, if there is one lesson writ large on the page of history, it is that power cannot be safely entrusted to men absolutely, neither to the one nor to the many. English democracy may, as Lord Morley seems to anticipate, alter the rule, but present signs are not encouraging.

Meanwhile, anti-Liberal opinion is unable to crystallise. Lecky's attack on democracy was, as Lord Morley pointed out with much acerbity,¹ singularly feeble. Lecky, a weak-kneed Liberal himself, failed to draw the all-important distinction which governs the whole question between democracy as a form of civilisation, which is Liberalism and may run in the veins of Joseph II. or Napoleon III., and democracy as a form of government, which means the acceptance of Chartist petitions and Newcastle programmes. Even now, an anti-democratic but not altogether anti-Liberal philosophy is forming itself, which will rest on biological and

¹ "Miscellanies," iv. p. 171.

economic and social observation — observation, for instance, of the inheritance of political, or for the matter of that, of other ability;¹ of the importance to progress of natural selection and of variety (this last even at the cost of considerable waste); of the vastly preponderant value of production to distribution as an agent of social reform; of the propriety of a national supervision, as against a national supersession, of philanthropic enterprise; and, last but not least, of the unreasonableness of professional disagreement among thinking men on mundane matters. And, if civilisation is not to become a hot-bed of anarchy, these ideas must some day pitch both sentimental and flaming democracy into the sea.

It may be worth while for a moment and by way of contrast, to look back on the creed with which democracy fought so victorious a conflict. Not the least of Lord Morley's accomplishments is that he is at the pains to appreciate his opponents' point of view and at the farthest possible remove from those who scoff without understanding. His study of Burke is as fair and friendly a criticism of the Conservative philosopher as we have a right to ask. Lord Morley puts us through some of the positions occupied by the 'Bossuet of politics.' We shall lose nothing by following him so far, and a little further.

See on this Flinders Petrie, "Janus in Modern Life," p. 4.

'Political Mysticism' lay at the root of the Conservative system. The constitution was 'a nice equipoise with steep precipices and deep waters upon all sides of it;'¹ thus ordered by God and given in trust to men.² The Church Establishment was a recognition of our debt and our duty towards our Heavenly Patron. It was with a just pride that Englishmen made their clergy the opulent equals or superiors of the nobility and gentry of the kingdom, looking to them to preserve in the spirit the injunctions of primitive and evangelic poverty.³ The sentiment of loyalty towards the Church was reflected in that of loyalty towards the Sovereign; and these emotions were the true glory and dignity of a civilised society.

In a hereditary aristocracy Burke perceived the great oaks that give shade and stability to the constitution.⁴ Men, like Richmond and Rockingham, who did their duty, passed down to their children and all connected with them a precious tradition of conduct and example, which was in itself a sufficient justification of their place and power. In the House of Commons he looked to find men of upright and independent character, not charged with any mandate nor delegated for any purpose, but devoting to their constituents their power of

¹ Burke, "Thoughts on the Present Discontents."

² *Ibid.*, "Reflections on the French Revolution," pp. 354, 361.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

⁴ Letter to the Duke of Richmond.

judgment as well as their power of work.¹ Above all he deprecated change. *Spartam nactus es; hanc exorna*. "A disposition to preserve and an ability to improve"² was his standard of a statesman. A man was not to be too critical of his inheritance. But extremes of government—despotisms and democracies—were perilous in the last degree.

"A perfect democracy," he says, in words which Lord Morley has forborne to quote, "is the most shameless thing in the world, because the people's approbation of their own acts has to them the appearance of a public judgment in their favour. As it is the most shameless, it is also the most fearless. No man apprehends in his person that he can be made subject to punishment."³

Whatever we may think of a state of society that for better or worse has definitely passed away, we may recognise that it possessed a stability to which our present modes of thought and government cannot pretend. Many particular benefits have come from Liberalism but social solidarity, which is the greatest benefit a constitution can bestow, has not come. "Whenever," says Burke—and Lord Morley endorses the statement as 'the weightiest and most important of all political

¹ Burke at Bristol (Morley "Burke," p. 107).

² "Reflections on the French Revolution," p. 44c.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

truths '¹—"a separation is made between liberty and justice, neither is, in my opinion, safe." We may hope, but few of us expect, that in the years that are coming those two great currents will flow on side by side.

As in politics, so in religion, Liberalism has shown no constructive power. The Encyclopædia of Diderot and his colleagues, the coarse jokes of Voltaire, applied in Lord Morley's view the appropriate solvent to such Christianity as France could boast of in the eighteenth century. In England he thinks Newman restored galvanic action to dead matter for another fifty years. That may or may not be the last word. Anyway Liberalism took no lasting hold of the public imagination in spiritual matters any more than in secular ones. Men were crying for bread, and their intellectual fathers gave them a stone. Mill offered his essay on Theism; Lord Morley offered Doubt. Religion, he said, had been a great force, and would be so again.² For the moment we must be content with that 'kind of doubt which is not without search.'³ Then he goes to Newman for his language:—

"Are there pleasures of Doubt, as well as of Inference and Assent? In one sense there are. Not, indeed, if doubt means ignorance, uncertainty, or hopeless suspense, but there is a certain grave acquiescence in ignorance, a

¹ "Burke," p. 213. ² "On Compromise," p. 36. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

recognition of our impotence to solve momentous and urgent questions, which has a satisfaction of its own. After high aspiration, after renewed endeavours, after bootless toil, after long wanderings, after hope, effort, weariness, failure, painfully alternating and recurring, it is an immense relief to the exhausted mind to be able to say, 'At length I know that I can know nothing about anything. . . . Ignorance remains the evil which it ever was, but something of the peace of certitude is gained in knowing the worst, and in having reconciled the mind to the endurance of it.'"¹

"Precisely," adds Lord Morley, "and what one would say of our own age is that it will not deliberately face this knowledge of the worst. So it misses the peace of certitude, and not only its peace but the strength and coherency that follow strict acceptance of the worst, when the worst is after all the best within reach."²

There are in his view three honourable positions open to all men—to affirm, to deny, to disclaim any grounds of opinion—faith, atheism, agnosticism. Most people shift their feet from one to the other. "They speak as if they affirmed, and they act as if they denied, and in their hearts they cherish a slovenly sort of suspicion that we can neither deny or affirm."³ For himself he makes no pretence to knowledge of these high things. Comte and the system of Comte are premature. One cannot as yet be positive; the

¹ "On Compromise," p. 132. (Quoted from Newman's "Grammar of Assent.")

² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

right of denial is hardly established. A great wilderness has to be traversed, where the charities of life will not enable those who are for God, and those who have no knowledge of Him to march side by side.¹ The new faith like the old will come with the sword. For our generation, and those nearest us, are like Balaam. They see it, but not nigh. Darkness lies between. And as the human race passes into the valley of decision, the best is that we should all be honest, fearless in assertion of opinion, sure of each other as friend or foe, knowing that the new faith will be of the same worth as the men who shape it. "We fight that others may enjoy, and many generations struggle and debate that one generation may hold something for proven."² There is the pathos of it. Voltaire, he commends, as we have seen, because he was

"perhaps the one great Frenchman who has known how to abide in patient contentment with an all but purely critical reserve, leaving reconstruction, its form, its modes, its epoch, for the fulness of time to disclose."

Yet Diderot seems to him a greater man inasmuch as he foresaw the scientific lines on which such a reconstruction must take place, and was, in the true sense of the word, a philosopher.³

¹ "On Compromise," p. 157.

² "Voltaire," p. 26.

³ "Diderot," i. p. 9.

Beyond this scientific foundation all he can predicate of the religion of the future is that it will have no priests, pledged by vows and compelled for subsistence, to stunt the free growth of their intellects;¹ that the instinct of holiness will be satisfied by a ministry in the brotherhood of men, the addition of a stone to the temple of freedom, a page to the book of knowledge, or a touch to the portrait of human perfection.² And in some beautiful, though not unsullied, words he reminds us how Condorcet, as he awaited the knock of the executioner, withdrew himself into the realm of pure reason, and offered his own poor efforts for light and liberty on the altar of human progress.³

These things were written before 1880, and already we may do something to sift the truth and error of them. Only incurable optimists can fancy that science is going to prescribe all the faiths and repeat all the injunctions of Christianity; that, for example, it is going to recommend the use of prayer and fasting, or the inviolable sanctity of the marriage vow.⁴ Science is very busy, as Lord Morley expected, in constructing a morality of its own. It can tell us much about the human body, of laws of health

¹ "On Compromise," p. 112.

² "Rousseau," ii. p. 277.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁴ Sir E. Ray Lankester is credited with the saying that Religion has nothing to hope and nothing to fear from Science. This is, I suppose, a rough statement of the true position.

and the penalty of disobeying them, which things once had much the appearance of arbitrary judgments. It can tell us more about the human mind than was ever guessed at; it can tell us of averages, of the behaviour of great multitudes drifting along in known conditions. But all this is morality, albeit morality touched with pathos, a philosophic substitute for religion; not religion itself. Of the human spirit, its heights and depths, its sense of personal duty, and its sense of sin, its justice, its loyalty, its love, science tells us nothing, or nothing at least that is not utterly laughable. And the few men, who do not let themselves drift, will still find in the Psalms and the Bible the best account and the best explanation of that world of 'passion and mystery,' from which we may in nowise escape.

Meanwhile, Lord Morley falls back on a philosophy not essentially different from Stoicism. With the gospel of uncertainty in his hand he requires of all men a rigid, strenuous life. Behind stern, set faces, we are to conceal our doubting hearts. When, for all we can tell, Humanity may already have crossed the summit of human perfectibility and be entering upon its decline, he would have our belief in the future remain undimmed.¹ The most credulous adherent of threadbare superstition never pledged himself so

¹ "Burke," p. 299.

unreservedly to the truth of his crumbling dogmas as Lord Morley to this faith in Progress (and by Progress he always means progress in high character); though the most perfectly rational estimate of the world would possibly show that the efforts of all the philanthropists merely suffice to turn the stream of human vice from one channel into another.¹ And truth itself, nicely limited by the not too extended range of our understanding, he will have us pursue with increasing endeavour, with the courage and confidence of those who seek or find the absolute. And, as if we had not contradiction enough, this proud, defiant creed, matured surely in the school of Prometheus and which could never be the property of more than the cultured few, is found in the mouth of an avowed democrat and suggested as the present and, for all one can see, the future philosophy for mankind.

Doubt is painful; conviction is pleasant. Therefore with those who have no surer guides than the utilitarians, Rousseau has won all along the line. In politics Socialism, in religion the "Savoyard Vicar," 'that rag of metaphysic,' as Lord Morley calls it, 'floating in the sunshine of sentimentalism,'²—these have many more

¹ A pamphlet by Professor Taylor on "The Diminishing Birth-rate," which had a wide circulation some few years ago, contains an unforgettable warning as to the impotence of improved conditions—of civilisation and the facilities it affords—to make men better.

² "Rousseau," ii. p. 279.

adherents, even in what is spoken of as the Liberal camp, than his own sombre faith. And in place of the tedious theologies and supplications, the *vita contemplativa*, the long pilgrimage of the Middle Age, a broad safe way, paved with petty philanthropies, hedged in with endless committee-meetings, and shaded by whole libraries of sensational novels, has been cut to Heaven (or Nirvana or whatever we may fancy our ultimate destination to be), though once the way there had been supposed on excellent grounds to be narrow, rough, and precipitous. There was evil enough in the old society to justify every one of Lord Morley's passionate indictments of it; and yet we may see that these men had hold of a view of life which is as much nobler and deeper than our own as Pascal's sad, severe thoughts are wiser than the false emotion of the "Contrat Social." Lord Morley, and those with whom he has thrown in his lot, have bidden us build a new road to eternity instead of mending the old one, and, where there should have been development, we have had reform. But these are reflections upon which it is more than time to turn our backs.

Thought was exchanged for action in 1883; the editorship of the *Pall Mall Gazette* for the representation of Newcastle. "On Compromise" was already a little forgotten, for the Oaths Act was not passed until 1888, and a seat in

Parliament entailed a theistic declaration. The party was heavily indebted to him for his philosophic journalism, and the debt was discharged in 1886 and 1892 by his appointment to the Irish Office. With the Irish Question at its height the post was in each case the roughest in the Cabinet, next to that of the Prime Minister. The English people had to be reconciled with the Irish members, and the Home-Rule Bills with the interest of both. Liberal sentiment required that Irishmen should vote Imperial taxation in the British Parliament. English sentiment, where it favoured the Bills at all, was eager to pack off the whole unruly troop, to whom chance had given such a predominant influence on British affairs, bag and baggage, to their own country, never to return. But this Gordian knot was never cut, nor, one may suspect, ever will be.

The Encyclopædists had been thinkers who questioned all things in heaven and earth, and let reason run riot as she would. In his new phase Lord Morley found men of affairs more congenial. Their problems were now his problems, just as had once been the case with those of the French Liberals. Much of the old interest, however, was still present in the characters he picked out. In the minds of Machiavelli and Cromwell the moralities—‘those noble moralities’ which, as he somewhere tells us, are ‘the life-

blood of style'—were predominant by action or reaction. Both men had thought a great deal about good and evil, and had met the alternatives in the practical work of the State. Machiavelli decided, as we know, that international morality was a dream; that, as his disciple put it, 'force and fraud were the cardinal virtues.' Darwin, against his will, taught the same thing. No demonstration of the unselfish instincts of motherhood seemed to wash clean the struggle of species with species, genus with genus, nation with nation.¹ The strong were more efficient, more useful than the weak, and the battle was to the strong. But Lord Morley will have none of it. He bids us look at the long issue of things, and condemn the whole line of Machiavellians—from Cæsar Borgia past Henri Quatre, William the Silent, Elizabeth, Frederick, down to Napoleon. "The world," he says, "in spite of a thousand mischances, and at tortoise-pace, has steadily moved away from them."²

Politics blind us all, and there are some who think that our vaunted progress is no better than retrogression. "The distinction of property and the stability of possession," says Hume, "are of all circumstances the most necessary for the establishment of human society." A Tory with these notions in his head might think that a

¹ See Romanes, "Darwin and after Darwin," i. p. 268.

² "Machiavelli," p. 45.

certain philanthropic party in modern politics was not so bad a representation of Machiavelli's "Prince." It exists to equalise wealth by force of law ; to make the rich poorer, the poor richer. A Prince, reputed liberal, says Machiavelli, if he does not plunder foreign nations, must raise the money either from his own or his subjects' purses. "In the first case he is to be frugal ; in the second he may be as profuse as he pleases, and baulk no point of liberality."¹ Our modern philanthropists are not so far out either in their weapons. Sentiment is invoked—the misery of the poor, the opulence of the rich ! The Bible is invoked and the liquor traffic encircled with flames of hell ; because men and women, adjudged fit to decide the policy of an empire at the polls, are thought unfit to decide the expediency of a glass of liquor, more or less, at the public house. Christ is invoked—Christ who preached without tiring the unimportance of worldly wealth, Who said He was no Judge or Divider, Who kept free of Cæsar and the things of Cæsar, Who spoke always of the inner life, is transformed into a communistic legislator.

"It is honourable," says Machiavelli, "to seem mild and merciful and courteous and religious and sincere, and indeed to be so, provided your mind be so rectified and prepared that you can act quite contrary on occasion."²

¹ "The Prince," ch. xvi.

² *Ibid.*, ch. xviii.

Anyway, whether or not its conclusions be true, whether or not the Liberal vine has borne the bitter grapes of Socialism, the Romanes' lecture on Machiavelli stands in the same category as its famous predecessor — Huxley's "Evolution and Ethics." Each is the protest of a singularly austere moralist against the logical effect of his own conclusions. Each is the confession of an idealist who fears that his followers, not unreasonably, may mistake him for something less. Natural selection in politics is as repugnant to the one as natural selection in science to the other. In each case it is the argument with Thrasymachus all over again—that justice is not after all the interest of the stronger. But, if the conclusion is so plainly true, the world, one must admit, has been strangely slow to discover it.

There was another moralist who lived in the thick of diplomacy, national and international, and reached very different conclusions to Machiavelli. Cromwell died, as he had lived, in the odour of sanctity. Fiercely hated and fiercely denounced, accused of unscrupulous ambition, selfishness, hypocrisy, of all the vices that Machiavelli had recommended, he died in the assurance that he was one of the elect, the chosen servant of God. For two centuries his name lay buried in discredit. Then Carlyle taught us, more or less justly, that he was a great Englishman. Lord Morley

follows timidly behind. But, whilst the mazes of moral casuistry are unravelled, the outstanding difficulties—Drogheda and Wexford and the suppression of that very form of government which he had fought to obtain—are left unresolved. The real defence and the only defence for him is that he was, as he supposed himself, in a nobler sense than Attila, ‘the scourge of God.’ He did his duty, asking no man’s praise. He was ‘blest.’ But on utilitarian grounds he is hopelessly condemned. Bismarck and Garibaldi waded through blood to give their countrymen stable and effective government. Whose happiness, in any but a transcendental sense, did Cromwell ever promote?

Gladstone’s mind was built after the design of the Cromwellian maze. He is the other great theological statesman of English history, and believed also in something like direct spiritual inspiration, and became involved too in the bogs of the Irish morass. As Cromwell had consulted the Old Testament, so Gladstone consulted the New. The Sermon on the Mount was to furnish the principles of government.

“People will perhaps some day wonder,” says Lord Morley in what is perhaps his most searching criticism of Gladstone’s career, “that many of those who derided the experiment and reproached its author, failed to see that they were making manifest in this a wholesale scepticism

as to truths that they professed to prize, far deeper and more destructive than the doubts and disbeliefs of the Gentiles of the outer court.”¹

Whether or not Christianity has been imperilled by the opposition of the Conservative party to Gladstonian politics, it is evident that Gladstone did bring a certain, and as some may think a reckless, interpretation of the Gospel into a sphere, where the Gospel had hardly ever before been preached at all and for which it was probably never intended. This must always be the defence of his policy at Majuba and in Ireland, and it is on this line that Lord Morley's book (which is what all biographies ought to be — a brief for the defence) advances to a vindication of politics that once looked cowardly and time-serving. Again, and on every page, the moral interest is dominant.

Historians, says Lord Morley, fall into three companies. There are annalists, statesmen, philosophers.² If this be so, he is himself in the second rank, with an eye to a place in the third. The coveted position, however, will hardly be conceded. Like the other historians in this collection he was qualified by passion, sentiment, conviction, to write the history of a particular phase of life and thought, which he apprehended mainly through its bearing on his own time.

¹ “Life of Gladstone,” i. p. 4.

² “Voltaire,” p. 299.

He saw that Liberalism had everywhere cleaned things up, but he did not recall the parable of the man, whose abode being swept and garnished, became the prey of seven evil spirits instead of one. It is the bane of the man of affairs who turns to history that he unconsciously supposes, or works as if he supposed, finality in the political and economic ideals of his own time. Lecky's patient, cautious, and, as Lord Morley would say, 'limpid' review of the French Liberals in his "History of England" is more likely to be received by posterity as the true measure of the Voltairean circle. But this is only to say that Lord Morley has the defects of his qualities. Common opinion would have been less inclined to believe Voltaire something more than a blasphemous sceptic, to see in him the rough model of a great reformer, if his critic had been more dispassionate. Uncommon opinion would have missed that strong emotion and elevation of tone, which give to all Lord Morley writes or says the rare flavour of a bygone vintage.

In another sense, beside the political and the religious, he is the heir of Voltaire. It was not the least of the effects of the Liberal movement that it revolutionised the conception of history. The "Essai sur les Mœurs" was as great an epoch in the modern world as the History of the Peloponnesian War had been in the ancient. Up till then history meant, for the most part, a

tale of great men, diplomacy, and scandal. The Christian and the courtier had their separate reasons for liking to have it so. The subjective treatment of events, of which the perfect example is contained in the Gospel of St John, was the bread of the one, as gossip was the bread of the other. Besides, as Bunyan says, Religion in those days mostly walked about in satin shoes. Liberalism threw aside the supremacy of character along with a mass of foolish, often prurient, detail. The observation of courts and camps was exchanged for a study of the moral, economic, and intellectual movement of society. Men became important exactly in so far, and only in so far, as they had perceived the possibilities of their age, had assisted at the obsequies of the past and the accouchement of the future. True greatness, and therefore true morality, was to understand your age.

Our vision is so mercifully shaded by the atmosphere of our prejudices and presuppositions that we are seldom dazzled by the logic of our thoughts. The scientific or evolutionary conception of society, fully and fairly applied, means that every man is what circumstances make him ; every country as advanced as conditions admit of ; every people blessed with the government it deserves. There is no room for regrets or reproaches. If we are discontented with present society, it is simply because we have outstripped

or fallen behind the current of our time. When the drifting multitude are abreast of us again, or we of them, the scene will change once more, and the mountains be made low and the valleys straight. Lord Morley, whatever he may say, has no right to call history a 'huge *pis-aller*.'¹ Such a view may make for effort, but it makes also for the belief that mankind lie under some primæval curse. The heart and the conscience may hardly be invoked to fetch the rationalistic historian out of his troubles. To understand, to explain, to trace down the long chain of causation the development of a society or of an individual as the product of a society, is surely the full extent of his duty.

However this may be, the reader has no reason to regret Lord Morley's passionate pre-occupation with the rights and wrongs of every question, old or new, that he touches. His style gains just where his consistency loses. Moral judgments, the parry and thrust of political principles, nourish and warm the style, make it earnest, forcible, eloquent. Of him it is exceptionally true that *le style c'est l'homme*, and in his own literary advice he says no more, though he gives a fine echo to the saying:—

“Style after all, one has always to remember, can never be anything but the reflex of ideas and

¹ “On Compromise,” pp. 80, 81.

habits of mind, and when respect for one's own personal dignity as a ruling and unique element in character gave way to sentimental love of the human race often real and often a pretence, old self-respecting modes of expression went out of fashion."¹

It is a saying of his that style works miracles. With his weather-eye always on Catholicism—that incalculable element in human affairs—he fancies that Newman was able by sheer force of style to lure the world back on to a quicksand, which else it had long forsaken.² The miracles of Revelation being abandoned, the miracles of literature begin. So much truth at least the theory possesses as this—that the tone, temper, and habit of mind of a whole generation may be moulded by style, and a man's sentiment formed, nowadays, as much by the literary manner of what he reads as by any other mundane influence whatever. Lord Morley's own writing might serve for an example. No one can lay down any book of his without feeling braced, stimulated, deepened, without becoming more conscious of the nobility of life. Too greatly suffused with moral emotion to possess the hard and brilliant clarity of the French school, with whom he has lived, his style has a terse argumentative vigour, which makes it an excellent model for educated orators, together with a certain stateliness of motion reminiscent of the grand manner. The

¹ "Voltaire," p. 124.

² "Miscellanies," iv. p. 161.

calm which is required of the highest literature, as of the highest art, is not there. He is too anxious to have us agree with him, too constant in pressing his views ; so that what Dryden wrote of Lucretius, with whom he so deeply sympathises, has become true of himself :—

“ If I am not mistaken, the distinguishing character of Lucretius, I mean of his soul and genius, is a certain kind of noble pride and positive assertion of his own opinions. . . . He seems to disdain all manner of replies, and is so confident of his cause that he is beforehand with his antagonists ; urging for them whatever he imagined they could say, and leaving them, as he supposes, without an objection in the future.”¹

His satire is very keen and bitter. What could be better for example than this on ‘the man of the world’?

“ Who does not know this temper of the man of the world, the worst enemy of the world. His inexhaustible patience of abuses that only torment others, his apologetic word for beliefs that may perhaps not be so precisely true as one might wish, and institutions that are not altogether so useful as some might think possible ; his cordiality towards progress and improvement in a general way, and his coldness or antipathy to each progressive proposal in particular ; his pygmy hope that life will one day become somewhat better, punily shivering by the side of his gigantic conviction that it might well be infinitely worse.”

¹ Quoted in Watson’s Introduction to his translation of Lucretius, p. xi.

But he can strike other chords at will, for there is nothing in this world to equal the strong man who is not grown hard; who, if he but knows his instrument, can touch all notes from fine rage to unsubdued suffering. The lecture on "Machiavelli" is probably the best of his pieces. Many voices, their sound stored in the experience of a life-time, which has been passed, like Machiavelli's own, partly in the council chamber of statesmen, partly in the "ancient courts of the men of old," blend to adorn and illustrate the *motif*. Molière, Goethe, Tennyson, Butler and Thucydides, Dante and Michelangelo—all are there, summoned at will to aid. It is, to change the metaphor, as if a man were to spread over the sober warp of his own life a woof of many tints and colours. For the warp is what it always was, a love of truth, keen, passionate, seldom faltering. This is that characteristic which he has most striven to impress upon his countrymen. And it is this rare quality which draws him nearest of all to that school of thought, to which he owed perhaps more than he knew, and whose conviction it was that the philosophic temper was first enjoined by Christianity. Newman—for to Newman we must be always returning—had an idea that Christianity had brought into the world that earnestness of purpose and seriousness of mind that are the first requisite

of scientific investigation.¹ He added a caution against rashness of assertion, and hastiness of conclusion, and confident reliance on our powers of reasoning. Some of us may like to fancy that, but for a neglect on one side to observe that caution, two of the loftier minds of the nineteenth century would have moved in closer accord. "Burke," says Lord Morley in a vivid sentence, "has the sacred gift of inspiring men to use a grave diligence in caring for high things and in making their lives at once rich and austere." No less may be said of himself.

¹ "Oxf. Univ. Serm." p. 8.

AUTHORITIES

The edition of Lord Morley's works used in preparing this essay is the Eversley, except in the case of the Fourth Series of "Miscellanies," lately published.

The Romanes lecture on "Machiavelli" is quoted from the 1898 reprint of the first edition: the "Life of Gladstone" from the 1904 reprint of the first edition.

There is no existing biography of Lord Morley, nor any article on him of any particular value, so far as the present writer is aware.

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